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The invasion of the United Kingdom : public controversy and official planning 1888-1918.

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THE INVASION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM: PUBLIC CONTROVERSY
AND OFFICIAL PLANNING 1888-1918

VOLUME 1.

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
University of London

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A B S T R A C T

To invade and conquer Great Britain by conveying the large armies of the Continent to her shores was a strategic problem which absorbed the most eminent military authorities of pre-1914 Europe. Tirpitz, Schlieffen, Foch, Roberts, Repington, Fisher, and the British, French, and German General Staffs devoted years of study to the complex issues involved in this enigmatic enterprise. In Britain, the question inspired the birth of the Blue Water School of naval strategy and for a generation thereafter remained the chief contention in a bitter struggle for predominance between the two services. Invasion was the first defence problem to be considered by the Committee of Imperial Defence and remained its major pre-occupation, inspiring altogether five exhaustive reviews between 1902 and 1914. Interest in invasion was not, however, confined to the military establishment. The German staff studies were activated by the Kaiser himself. In Britain, Cabinet ministers such as Balfour and Churchill, and civilian strategists such as Corbett, attacked the mysteries of invasion with an intellectual sophistication which eclipsed the work of serving professionals.

Especially in Britain, a possible invasion was a defence question which preoccupied all classes of society. Journals and newspapers analyzed its complexities for the patriotic edification of a middle class readership, while unscrupulous journalists and publicists exploited the public's anxiety over overseas attack for less noble motives. The common man attested to his interest in the issue by purchasing sensational prophecies of future invasion

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by the million, and invasion scares in 1888, 1900, 1909, and 1914 revealed a deep national concern that would diminish only during the war itself. The test of war provided the final proof that invasion was a remote contingency. By 1918, a long strategic era was drawing to a close as airpower displaced seapower as Britain's first line of defence.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

This study originated with a simple question. how and why did the possibility of invasion come to play a predominant role in British public opinion and official policy in the years before and during the First World War? The dimensions of the invasion controversy were dictated by the nature of the invasion operation itself. An amphibious landing to this day remains one of the more complex operations of military science, involving both naval and military expertise. As neither army nor navy had a monopoly of interest in the invasion question, an interservice controversy of great bitterness evolved after 1888, that was eventually resolved only through the intervention of the Cabinet in 1902-03.

Underlying this quarrel, and the public controversy which amplified it, were certain technological and diplomatic factors peculiar to the late 19th century. British military power had always been small in relation to the large armies of the Continental states, her potential adversaries, and confidence in the ability of the Royal Navy to destroy an invasion flotilla before it reached British shores was not shared by all sections of the British public. In the course of the nineteenth century, several developments conspired to aggravate traditional anxieties over the possibilities of an overseas attack.

First, the Napoleonic campaigns had left a tradition of large conscript armies on the Continent. Especially after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, both these states continued to expand the

size of their national armies. A simultaneous acceleration of development in weapons promised to transform the conditions of war between European powers. On land, steam and the telegraph were applied to the problem of concentrating and moving mass armies. Especially after the Prussian victory of 1870-71, the mobilization race became the chief concern of European strategists. Defence-minded Englishmen, aware of the great expansion in the size of Continental armies, of rapidly increasing firepower and mobility available to modern armies, of changing standards of military efficiency, began to wonder if these developments threatened the security of the home island. Increasingly they called for reform of the British army, which until the end of the century remained an imperial police force. Military and political officials alike apparently had no interest in the momentous military developments on the Continent.

The growth in the size of Continental armies, the acceleration of mobilization, and the application of the railroad and telegraph all suggested that the military dimension of the invasion operation had been transformed beyond the bounds of historical experience. The same lesson seemed to be reinforced by parallel developments at sea. In mid-century, the Royal Navy had undergone a revolution in naval technology brought about by the application of steam power, iron and steel construction, armour plate and turrets to the warship.¹ Not only was naval materiel and military organization apparently revolutionized, but empirical experience of overseas

1. S.L. Sandler. The Emergence of the Modern British Capital Ship, 1863-1870. London Ph. D., 1905.

landings under the new conditions was almost completely lacking. Lack of information led to doubts that predominant sea power would still suffice to prevent invasion and the obviously changed conditions of war on land and sea led to conjecture and anxiety regarding Great Britain's inviolability from overseas attack.

The last occasion in history when invasion had threatened under the classical conditions had been in 1803-1805, when Napoleon had assembled an immense flotilla of barges and transports, along with an "Army of England" at Boulogne, claiming that 12 hours' command of the Channel would suffice for the ruin of England. Britain prepared for invasion: every village raised its local defence force and the Government prepared fortified positions in coastal areas and erected stone "Martello Towers", armed with ships' cannon, along the coast. The French army was deterred by these preparations and British naval dispositions and broke camp in September 1805. The Trafalgar victory of October 22 confirmed British control of the seas.¹

But in the course of the century, diplomatic and technological developments threatened to invalidate the lessons of the past. The first of the modern invasion scares arose from a statement of Lord Palmerston that "Steam navigation has rendered that which was before impassable by a military force nothing more than a river passable by a steam bridge."²

Palmerston's assertion was apparently verified later when it became known

1. For historical treatments of Napoleon's 1805 preparations for the invasion of England, see Edouard Desbrières. Projets et tentatives de débarquement dans les Îles britanniques. Etat-major de l'armée, Paris, 1900-1902. (4 vols.); Fernand Nicolay. Napoleon at the Boulogne Camp. London, 1907; A.M. Broadley and H.F.N. Wheeler. Napoleon I and His Invasion of England. London, 1907 describes British defensive preparations.

2. Hansard. 30 July 1845. col. 1224. See also cols. 1223-1234.

that the Duke of Wellington was gravely disturbed over the possibility of French invasion, after having extensively reconnoitred much of Southwest England. The Duke asserted that

except immediately under the fire of Dover Castle, there is not a spot on the coast on which infantry might not be thrown on shore at any time of tide, with any wind, and in any weather, and from which such body of infantry, so thrown on shore, would not find within a distance of five miles a road into the interior of the country, through the cliffs, practicable for the march of a body of troops.¹

The Times was filled with letters which echoed the Duke's misgivings, warning that the newspapers of Paris were full of implacable animosity to England, that the French army was well trained in embarkations owing to the landings in Algeria and was inured to hardship, danger, and bloodshed. The French had recently opened railways to Havre and Boulogne and it would now take them only 60 hours to ship troops from Paris to Southampton or Portsmouth. Against this force England had only 4000 troops in London: it was urged that a telegraph system and a uniform railway gauge be adopted to aid in the mobilization of the defence forces.² But the scare ended ignominiously as Louis-Phillippe, the supposed instigator of the treacherous attack, was overthrown and came to England for asylum.

But British suspicions were again activated by Louis Napoleon's coup d'état and assumption of the Imperial title in 1851-52. His conscious evocation of the Napoleonic tradition of military adventure again brought invasion to the minds of eminent Englishmen. In the House of Lords, the

1. Lt. Col. G. Wrottesley. Life and Letters of Sir John Burgoyne. Vol. I. p. 447. Bentley, London, 1873. See also pp. 434-451.

2. Times 1 December 1847, p. 8; 2 December 1847, pp. 5,8; 3 December 1847, p. 8; 24 December 1847, p.5; 31 December 1847, p.8; 5 January 1848, p.5; See also The Spectator. 1 January 1848, p.13; 8 January 1848, pp. 34-35; 15 January 1848, pp. 60-61.

Earl of Derby, Lord Palmerston and Lord John Russell discussed the ease of a French invasion. A bill to enlarge the Militia was passed after Palmerston had declared in the Commons that steam would enable the French to throw from fifty to sixty thousand men into Britain from Cherbourg in one night, warning that "the very ship despatched to convey to this country intelligence of the threatened armament would probably not reach our shores much sooner than the hostile expedition." Measures providing for the defence of the Channel by sailors and marines passed both Houses without a division.¹

The issue was revived in the spring of 1859, when it was learned that the French were building the world's first ironclad warship, La Gloire. The First Lord of the Admiralty stated that the Royal Navy was not "in a proper and adequate state for the defence of our coasts" as it did not exceed the strength of the French, and asked for the addition of 26 ships to the Fleet within a year. During July, the House of Lords discussed the possibility of invasion at length. One peer called for 70 battleships and forts to cover every port and possible landing place; another, who lived in France, stated that the whole populace of France yearned for invasion so that

the French eagles might stream from every steeple from Acton to Ealing, and from Ealing to Harrow - The very prospect was enough to throw every Frenchman into a transport of joy... There was not a single widow in France who would not give her last son, or a single beggar who would not give his last penny to carry out such a project.²

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1. Hansard. (Commons) 16 February 1852. cols. 551-553; 562-653, 568-581; 20 February 1852, cols. 842-849. Richard Cobden. The Three Panics. London, 1862, pp. 26, 33.
 2. Hansard (Lords) Lord Howden. 1 July 1859. cols. 518-519. See also Ibid., cols. 528-533; 5 July 1859, cols. 616-627; 642-648

This was the only type of war that would unify all of France. In the Commons, one M.P. described the brilliant prospects of an invading French Army.

That Army could leave its own shores an exultant, and by anticipation, a victorious army. From the moment it landed on the shores of England it would have to fight its way with the desperation of a forlorn hope, and, within two or three weeks of the landing of the first Zouave, either it ¹ would be completely annihilated, or London would be taken.

The nation should prepare as if the attack was expected within a week, and shipyards should work overtime to meet the challenge of the French ironclads.

As gunboats could be built more rapidly than men-of-war, gunboats should be multiplied as fast as possible; as volunteers could be enrolled faster than the line, they should at once be raised; as rifles could not be made fast enough in England, we should renew that order in Belgium, even though they should cost sixpence a piece more than the Horse Guards' regulation; and night and day ² the process should go on till the country was made safe.

The campaign for preparedness spread to the nation at large. Queen Victoria issued a proclamation calling upon young patriots to form local units of Volunteer riflemen, and on May 8, the Times published a poem by Tennyson, the Poet Laureate, entitled Form, Form, Riflemen, Form in support of the movement. The Prime Minister later announced that over 200,000 Volunteers were available to resist invasion. The Volunteers became a large and powerful group politically, with a vested interest in home defence which gave them a leading role in the invasion controversy for the next half century. At the same time a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the national defences, and eventually reported that the Royal Navy was no longer sufficient to defend the Kingdom against invasion, owing

1. Hansard (Commons) 29 July 1859. col. 685.

2. Ibid. cols. 686-687. See also cols. 528-533.

to the advent of steam and the commitments of Imperial defence. The Commissioners recommended that £12 million be appropriated for the construction of coastal forts at strategic locations. Although its recommendations were never fully carried out, the 1860 Commission, together with the founding of the Volunteers, marked the beginning of a period in which invasion was regarded primarily as a military problem, based upon land defences and a home defence army.¹

Invasion again became an issue a decade later, when the defeat of the French army by the Prussians focused attention on the backward condition of British defence in relation to the Continent, and accelerated the progress of Cardwell's reforms in the British army. The traditional fear of France, previously regarded as the first military power in Europe, was temporarily forgotten, and suspicions began to form regarding the future plans of the Prussians. The Times stated (3 January) that it was beginning the year with serious misgivings as to the state of the British army, and its Paris correspondent reported a few days later that the invasion of England was the favourite topic of the German officers at Versailles.² The Times leader for 4 January found a lesson in the fate of France.

As we stand on our Southern cliffs and survey the friendly waves which have for so many centuries warded off invasion from our shores, as we walk along the streets of old London, which no conqueror's foot has trodden for eight hundred years, we can easily imagine what our thoughts would

1. Times. 9 May 1859, p. 9. Cobden, Op.Cit.
Reports from Commissioners. 1860. Vol. XXIII. "Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Consider the Defences of the United Kingdom.." H.M.S.O., 1860.
Vice-Admiral P.H. Colomb. "The Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Consider the Defences of the United Kingdom." R.U.S.I. Journal. April 1898. pp. 456-466. Donald M. Schurman. The Education of a Navy.
(continued next p.)

be at the mere anticipation of Prussian Uhlans or Bavarian dragoons making themselves at home at St. James' or occupying the city in force. We ought earnestly to pray that the cup which would be so bitter for us might pass from our neighbours.

It was in this atmosphere of apprehension that Blackwood's Magazine published a short story entitled "The Battle of Dorking" by an army officer named George Chesney. This described in graphic terms a German invasion of England at a time when both the Fleet and Regular Army have been called away for distant defence tasks. The Channel Fleet is destroyed by a secret device and 200,000 Prussian invaders come ashore and march towards London with the perfection of a machine, while the disorganized and ill-prepared defenders find themselves without leadership, supplies, food or shelter. The article attracted a great deal of attention: by the end of May it had gone through eight printings. Eventually some dozen pamphlets were printed in reply which challenged its picture of invasion. Naval authorities replied that the Fleet could never be lured away into a trap; advocates of the Volunteers maintained that they would be a match for the invaders, and army officers argued that the Regular Army would never be dispersed to a degree that would make invasion possible.²

But Chesney's method of dramatising the dangers of possible invasion

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1. (contd. from previous p.) Cassells, London, 1965. pp. 18-21.
"Elements of National Defence". Spectator. 22 January 1859, p.93;
30 July 1859, p.785.
 2. (from previous p.) I.F. Clarke. "The Battle of Dorking". Victorian Studies 1965. p. 314.
 1. Times 4 January 1871. p. 9
 2. "The Battle of Dorking: Reminiscences of a Volunteer." Blackwoods Magazine . May 1871. pp. 539-572; Our Hero, or Who Won the Battle of Dorking. London, 1871. Max Moltruhn. The Other Side at the Battle of Dorking. London, 1871. What Happened after the Battle of Dorking, or the Victory of Tunbridge Wells. London, 1871.
I.F. Clarke. Voices Propheying War, 1763-1984. O.U.P., 1966, pp. 29-47

established an important precedent, for the widening of the electorate and the increasing literacy among the British public would open up the question of national defence to a wider audience than the small groups representing special interests in the services and Parliament. The invasion pamphlet became a means for protagonists of a more efficient home defence to reach the general public; soon the defence-minded could appeal directly to the masses.

In the next decade, a new technical development again threatened Britain's insularity. In the 1840's, it was thought that steam had bridged the channel; in the 1850's, French ironclad warships were regarded as threats to British safety. The new threat, beginning in the 1880's, was the channel tunnel. Those opposed to the scheme made use of the argument that it would provide a perfect avenue of invasion for the French. Again pamphlets appeared as propaganda against the tunnel, which depicted masses of French troops erupting from the end of the tunnel into Dover.¹ A great petition of protest was delivered to Parliament against the scheme, and a Select Committee of both Houses was appointed to consider the proposal in the light of national security. Naval authorities testified that the tunnel would by-pass the Fleet and neutralise Britain's

1. "Cassandra." The Channel Tunnel; or England's Ruin. London, 1876.
A. F. The Seizure of the Channel Tunnel. London, 1882.
J.T. Knowles. The Channel Tunnel and Public Opinion London, 1883.
"Grip". How John Bull Lost London. London, 1882.

traditional first line of defence.¹ Eminent military officials, such as Lieutenant-General Sir Garnet Wolseley, were also hostile. Wolseley had earlier approved of the scheme, apparently as a means of justifying increases in the size of the Regular Army, on the basis that the tunnel would represent a land frontier with France.² In presenting evidence before the Select Committee, Wolseley asked for the construction of fortresses and a large garrison to guard against the possibility of a surprise French attack. He asserted that the military danger represented by the tunnel was indicated by the elaborate precautions which were admitted as necessary by even its advocates. He believed that it could be easily seized by the French without warning, and that 20,000 French soldiers could be transported through it in one night. The French failure to destroy their railway tunnels in 1870 raised the possibility that the tunnel might not be destroyed in time to prevent the passage of an army of invasion.

Wolseley refined his argument against the tunnel by stating that the most likely form of future attack would not come through the tunnel itself, but rather as a raid from the sea which would seize the mouth of the tunnel and the surrounding area as a bridgehead for invasion, possibly aided by disguised Frenchmen and Irish Republicans living in Dover. The ^{mouth} tunnel itself could be defended by fifty riflemen, but more ambitious efforts were required to guard against the capture of Dover. Wolseley advocated the construction of a first-class fortress with a garrison of 10,000 Regulars, reinforced by artillery which would command the tunnel

1. C. 248. Report from the Joint Committee of the House of Lords and the House of Commons on the Channel Tunnel. 10 July 1883. Evidence of Admiral Sir Cooper-Key, pp. 643-44.

C. 3358. Correspondence with Reference to the Proposed Construction of A Channel Tunnel. pp. 190-192. "The Case Against the Channel Tunnel." United Services Magazine. June 1890.

2. Lord Sydenham of Combe. My Working Life. Murray, London, 1927. p. 205a.

exit and all approaches to the town.¹ The Duke of Cambridge endorsed Wolseley's proposal and pointed out that the tunnel had an additional danger involving Britain in Continental wars, as any invader of France could pass through it.² The War Office strengthened its case by commissioning Colonel (later General) J.F. Maurice to write a study of Hostilities without Declaration of War, which listed a series of surprise attacks which had occurred over the last 200 years, indicating that the majority of wars during that time had begun without warning.

But military opinion was not united on the Channel tunnel. It was pointed out by other officers that a French attack would leave her open to German intervention, that any French mobilization would come to the early notice of British authorities. If Dover could be seized with all its fortifications intact, it was argued that England could be invaded with recourse to a tunnel; it was ridiculous to suggest that the British army was not equal to defending a narrow opening where hardly 20 men could march abreast. The task facing the potential invaders was formidable: they would have to march over 30 miles in the tunnel without lights, and probably without ventilation, in constant fear of drowning or being blown by mines. Similar fears had prevented the Germans from marching through the French railway tunnels in 1870. Lord Lansdowne's report as Chairman of the Select Committee contained the most comprehensive critique of Wolseley's case for a French invasion through the tunnel. Lansdowne pointed out that such an

1. C. 3358. "Memorandum by Lt.-Gen. Sir Garnet Wolseley." 10 December 1881. pp. 210-218.

2. Ibid. "Observations by His Royal Highness the Field-Marshal Commander-in-Chief." 23 June 1882. pp. 299-305.

attack was dependent upon the conjunction of eight improbable conditions. The invaders would have to be despatched in absolute secrecy, cross the Channel unobserved and uncontested by the Royal Navy, and disembark without interruption or opposition from the land. They would then have to advance from the landing place to the tunnel exit without being discovered or resisted, finding the garrison absolutely unprepared, and capturing the defences simultaneously and intact so that the tunnel could not be closed or destroyed.¹ Lansdowne's views, however, did not prevail, and the Select Committee voted 6-4 against continuing the tunnel project in^{July} 1883.

On each of these four occasions, British apprehensions over invasion were related to technical development. In 1847-1848, it was supposed that steam had bridged the channel; in 1859-1860, the introduction of the iron-clad warship seemed to threaten British sea supremacy; in 1870-1871, the brilliant Prussian victory, based on the use of railways as a vehicle of rapid mobilization and concentration gave rise to speculation that England could share France's fate; and in 1881-1883, the progress of civil engineering made the Channel Tunnel feasible as a further threat to British insularity. In addition, a series of technical innovations affecting warships seemed to invalidate Britain's historic reliance upon her Fleet as the first line of defence against invasion. There was little information available regarding the conditions of naval war under the new circumstances of steam power and iron and steel construction, and the lack of hard information gave rise to speculations that classic naval strategy and tactics no longer applied. Another fluctuating factor bearing upon the defence of Britain was French internal instability, which gave rise

1. C. 248. pp. xxi-xxii.

to British fears that some military adventurer would seize power in the Bonapartist tradition and embark upon the invasion of England as a means of unifying the country. Three of the mid-century invasion scares were connected with changes of regimes in France: that of 1847-48 with the fall of Louis Phillippe and the establishment of the Second Republic, that of 1851-2 with the establishment of the Second Empire, and that of 1870-71, with the fall of the Empire and the establishment of the Third Republic. The reality of France's naval and military power contrasted with her political vicissitudes: until the defeats of 1870 the French army was regarded as the first in Europe, and the French navy until the end of the century was the Royal Navy's most formidable rival. Geography and history also cast France in the role of the most likely invader, for she was the closest military power to British shores, and her long coast-line contained several ports in which invasion could be prepared: the memory of the Napoleonic Wars and her Republican and Catholic traditions made her appear the natural enemy of England, and monarchist and Protestant Prussia the natural ally.

On the British side, it is noteworthy that all those who called attention to the possibility of a French invasion - Palmerston, Wellington, Lord John Russell, Colonel Chesney, and Wolseley - were all political or military authorities who had little knowledge of the naval difficulties involved in the operation of invasion. Their approach to invasion, like that of the mass of the British public, was essentially intuitive, and their pronouncements as to the dangers of invasion were not challenged by naval authorities. This tradition of interservice accord came to an end

in 1888, when a new school of naval strategy arose, which challenged the thinking of the previous generation, proclaiming that invasion was a naval, not a military question, and asserting that the historic conditions affecting the employment of sea power were in no way affected by the technological revolution at sea. With the beginning of a prolonged and bitter debate between British naval and military authorities over the probability of overseas attack, against a background of reawakened public and official interest in the question of national security, the modern history of the invasion controversy begins.

CHAPTER I: THE INVASION SCARE OF 1888

The year 1888 opened uneasily for those ^{concerned} ~~disposed~~ over Britain's lack of security from foreign invasion. For several months the British press and periodicals had been filled with speculations regarding an impending conflict between Germany and France - a conflict in which it was widely thought Britain could not long remain uninvolved.¹ In Paris, Admiral Hyacinthe Aube and General Georges Boulanger had joined the French Cabinet as Ministers of Marine and War, respectively. Aube was widely regarded in England as a fire-brand, owing to his open advocacy of unrestricted commerce raiding and bombardment of coastal towns in a future naval war. Boulanger was even more of a British bête noir. After his removal from the Cabinet in May 1887 he had courted the French authoritarian right, and was widely (and correctly) suspected of planning a coup d'état which might be followed by a military adventure such as the invasion of England, to achieve popular support. For several years pamphlets depicting the conquest of England had been appearing in Continental countries, and were quickly translated and sold for the edification of the British public.² The pending Tercentenary of the Spanish Armada in addition served as a reminder that England did not enjoy perfect immunity from attempts at invasion.³

The continuing political tension on the Continent had had a profound

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1. Lady Gwendolyn Cecil. Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury. Hodder & Stoughton, 1931-2. Vol. IV. pp. 10-11.
 2. Plus d'Angleterre. Paris, 1887, translated as: Down with England! London, 1888. Spiridion Gopcevic. "Der Grosse Seekrieg im Jahre 1888." Internationale Revue über die Gesamten Armeen und Flotten. July-September, 1886. Translated as: The Conquest of Britain in 1888. Griffin, Portsmouth, 1887.
 3. Times. 17 May 1888. p. 5.

effect upon British military writers and reformers, several of whom had been proclaiming for years the nation's vulnerability before an invader. Sir Charles Dilke, a Minister in Gladstone's last Government, had exposed the extent of British military weakness and the likelihood of invasion in studies of The Present Position of European Politics (1887) and The British Army (1888).¹ Major General Sir John Frederick Maurice warned in the Fortnightly Review that "the English fleet is completely unable, with its present strength, to save our shores and commerce from even one foreign fleet."² His further writings warned that Britain might lose control of the Channel long enough to permit an enemy landing on her soil.³ Captain F.N. Maude devoted an entire volume to The Invasion and Defence of England.⁴ One of the central activists in the invasion agitation was Lieutenant General Sir Edward Hamley,⁵ who enjoyed great prestige as a strategist owing to his Operations of War. Hamley and his lieutenants had for several years been leading a movement to "fortify" London. Hamley and his disciples, mostly officers of the Royal Engineers, wished to surround the capital with a girdle of earthworks to protect it against a sudden dash by an invading enemy column. Their proposals were aired in the House of Commons, in military and literary journals, and at the

1. The Present Position of European Politics, Chapman and Hall, London, 1887. pp. 290-295, 299-302, 31-15; The British Army, Chapman and Hall, London, 1888, p.204.

2. "The Naval Manoeuvres." Fortnightly Review (1888) p.402.

3. Jay Luvvaas. The Education of an Army. Cassell, London, 1965, p.204.

4. The Invasion and Defence of England. Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta, 1888.

5. Hamley's life and career is covered in I.A. Shand. Life of General Sir Edward Bruce Hamley. Blackwoods, Edinburgh, 1895, and in Luvvaas. Op. Cit. pp. 130-68.

lecture hall of the Royal United Service Institution.

While Hamley and his disciples presented their proposals to the public, the War Office had also been exerting pressure upon the Cabinet behind the scenes on behalf of an improved home defence. As early as August 1886, in the first week of the new Salisbury Government, Major-General Sir Henry Brackenbury, Director of Military Intelligence, had sent the Prime Minister a "General Sketch of the Situation Abroad and at Home from a Military Standpoint", which pointed out that

Elaborate studies have been made of the coasts, and of the positions lying between them and London. But we are still without any organization for the assembly, the supply, or the transport of our scattered forces; we are still without any comprehensive plan for defence. It is admitted on every hand that the object of any enemy, who might attempt to invade us, would be, once our fleet (were) disposed of, to land near to, and march direct upon, London. Yet there are points on our coast, within an easy four days' march of London, well suited for the disembarkation of a large force and absolutely without defensive works, while London itself, the richest town in the world, lies undefended at the mercy of the invader.²

Brackenbury feared a Franco-Russian alliance and asked for two completely equipped Army Corps - 60,000 men strong-and "a well-matured defensive plan" to strengthen Britain's military position in relation to the huge armies of the Continent. Because Brackenbury was overwhelmed with work, the new post of Assistant Adjutant General was created in late 1887 to coordinate the efforts of the various departments working on home defence. Colonel (later Major-General) John Ardagh, who was called to fill the new post, was

1. Hansard. (Commons) 14 March 1887. cols. 233-237.
Archibald Forbes. "In Case of Invasion". Nineteenth Century. April 1885. pp. 633-643; Major H.E. Elsdale, R.E. "The Defense of London and of England." R.U.S.I. Journal. (1886) pp. 601-670; Col. W.W. Knollys. "Our Hearths and Homes." Colburn's United Service Magazine. June 1887. p. 48 ff.; General Sir Edward Hamley: "The Defencelessness of London." Nineteenth Century. May 1888. pp. 633-640; "The Minimum Force Requisite for Security." Ibid., June 1888. pp. 789-798; Col. Sir Charles
(contd. next p.)

well acquainted with the invasion problem, for he had been a member of the Royal Commission on Defences in 1859-60, the Coast Defence Committee, and the Defence and Fortification Committee, Ardagh's new responsibilities as director of the defence of the United Kingdom included

offensive or defensive operations, fortresses, forts, batteries, garrisons, movements by rail or road, supplies, stores, strategical combinations, fighting positions, intelligence cooperation with Navy, and miscellaneous matters.¹

Ardagh's department was somewhat influenced by Hamley's proposals for the London defences. In January 1888, Ardagh suggested to Stanhope, the Secretary of State for War, that the sites selected for the defence of London should serve as the scene of the forthcoming manoeuvres of the Auxiliary Forces. The plan was

to organize the occupation of a defensive position to oppose an advance from the coast on London - irrespective of the hypothetical line of the forts. Such positions are offered by the great chalk escarpment from Guildford to Sevenoaks, and by the line of the Davent Valley.

But nothing came of the idea, for Stanhope replied that the Government could not provide funds for this purpose.²

But in April 1888 Ardagh presented his ideas in greater detail. He challenged the leisurely assumptions of the existing home defence planning, which assigned six weeks to the preparation of a chain of fortified positions around London.

1. (continued from previous page): Nugent, R.E. "Thoughts upon Invasion.." R.U.S.I. Journal. (1888) pp. 165-173.

2. (From previous page): WO 33/46. "General Sketch of the Situation Abroad and at Home from a Military Standpoint." 3 August 1886. pp. 21-22.

1. Ardagh MSS. PRO 30/40/13 "written for Lansdowne in India. 14 March 1890."

2. Ibid. PRO 30/40/2 Ardagh to Stanhope. 31 January 1888.

the general opinion now is, that so far from having an interval of six weeks for preparation after the declaration of war, the actual commencement of hostilities¹ will be our first notice of the existence of a state of war.

It would be greatly in the invader's interest to achieve a surprise as complete as possible: therefore British defence schemes should assume a week's warning, as a maximum. The general idea of Ardagh's scheme was to form a small mobile army of all the Regulars in the Kingdom, who would be organized into three Army Corps and distributed, on the first alarm, at various railway junctions between London and the coast, which would enable them to meet threats of invasion quickly. As superiority of firepower had passed from the coast fort to the ship, Ardagh would keep the defence force back from the coast and engage the invaders as they advanced inland. Here all available troops would be brought to bear while a defensive line was hurriedly constructed. Behind the Regulars seven divisions of the Volunteers would be mobilized for the defence of London. Ardagh admitted the desirability of a line of fortifications around the capital, but believed this would be likely to be forced, as it would be extemporized under emergency conditions. He advocated instead the preparation of entrenched Volunteer encampments at Aldershot, Caterham, Chatham, Tilbury, Warley, and Epping, where Auxiliary troops could prepare themselves by assembling and carrying out large-scale manoeuvres.²

Stanhope forwarded a copy of Ardagh's proposals to Hamley, who replied that the defensive line should be placed closer to London, which would make it shorter and thus more resistant to enemy attack. Furthermore,

1. Cab 37/21/6 All6 "Defence of England: Mobilization of the Regular and Auxiliary Forces for Home Defence." 17 April 1888. pp. 1-2.

2. Ibid. p.7.

To place our permanent magazines and stores within the proposed camps, entailing their loss along with that of the camps ... would be so obvious a mistake that it need not be dwelt on. No time for special training will be afforded after the declaration of war; the troops, all from distant points, will be unacquainted with the ground, except so far as an annual exercise may have given some of them a knowledge of it; considerable manoeuvring power will be demanded of them; and it is ^(im)probable that even a regular army, occupying in the same force the camps designated and there awaiting the enemy ... could assemble in time on the point of attack ...¹

Hamley went on to repeat his earlier recommendation that the London Volunteers be doubled in size to form a Guard of London. Most of his ideas were eventually adopted by the Government.

Other improvements affecting home defence were announced in Parliament in early 1888, including the institution of a Royal Commission to inquire into "the extent to which our Naval and Military systems, as at present organized and administered, are adapted to the national wants." This eventually became the Hartington Commission of 1890.² A National Defence Bill was introduced on May 3rd, the object of which was to speed the mobilization of the Yeomanry and Volunteers in an emergency. Other sections of the Bill, quickly passed into law, provided for the precedence of military traffic and the requisition of rolling stock on the railways in a situation of national emergency.³ The movement to "fortify" London reached its climax on May 9, when a deputation of anxious M.P.s called upon Stanhope to receive assurances regarding the safety of the capital. He told them of the steps being taken to protect London from a sudden

1. Shand. Op. Cit. p. 257.

2. Hansard (Commons) 4 May 1888. col. 1370-1373; 16 April 1888, col. 1329.

3. Ibid. 3 May 1888, col. 1250; 9 August 1888, col. 248.

attack from the Thames, as well as of efforts to reform the home defence forces: "our object may be said to so organize these multifarious forces so as to be able to produce at short notice a field army thoroughly able to defend England, and primarily to protect London."¹

The Daily Telegraph had been giving full editorial support to the Defence of London agitation, and on May 11th published a prominent article which mounted a furious attack on the Government. This alleged, on "the highest military authority," that "the nation was wholly unprepared for war, if not at the mercy of any European enemy" who could get his troops ashore. It was asserted that

An invasion of England is possible, and the defence of London is a subject that ought not to wait. Cobden, pacific as he was, declared he would rather double the National Debt than have a French army in England... London is probable the only capital in Europe which exists, not only without defences, but without plans of defence.

Because a hostile fleet could bridge the Channel in a few hours, it was necessary to act promptly. London was the richest city in the world, and its capture would signal the end of the Empire. The Telegraph recommended that Hamley's scheme be adopted, and that a girdle of earthworks be excavated around the city, which could be manned, in case of invasion, by Volunteers led by retired officers of the Regular Army.² The article contained such a violent attack on the Government that attention was

¹ WO 33/48 A121 "Reply by the Right Hon. E. Stanhope to a Deputation of Members of Parliament on the subject of national defence." 9 May 1888. "The Defence of London. Government Proposals." Daily Telegraph. 10 May 1888. p.4.

"The Defence of the Country." Times. 4 May 1888. p.12.

2. "England in Danger". Daily Telegraph. 11 May 1888. p.5

called to it in the House of Lords that very morning. The Duke of Cambridge, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, was asked if he was the ^{military} "highest authority" upon whose remarks the article had been based. This the Duke emphatically denied.¹ At this point Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, intervened in the debate. Although Salisbury's forte was as an urbane and patrician diplomat, he was especially sensitive to charges of neglecting the national defense, for the resignation of Lord Randolph Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer over alleged waste and extravagance in the Army and Navy Estimates was a matter of recent memory. The Government had raised the Estimates of both services in recent years, and that the Prime Minister quoted statistics to prove/his Government had not been deaf to the agitation for a larger fleet and a more effective army. Salisbury then revealed that the Daily Telegraph article had been based upon remarks made by Viscount Garnet Wolseley, the Adjutant-General of the Army, who was second only to the Duke of Cambridge in the War Office hierarchy. Wolseley was perhaps the pre-eminent military hero of the British public at this time, for his long career in small wars in China, Canada, and Africa had recently reached its culmination in the occupation of Egypt (1882) and his command of the Unsuccessful Gordon Relief Expedition (1885). His colourful career had gained him a peerage, and the esteem of the public, and he had been caricatured as "the very model of a modern Major-General" by Gilbert and Sullivan.

1. Hansard (Lords) 11 May 1888. col. 5.

But Wolseley's reputation with the public did not deter the Prime Minister from launching a severe attack upon the "tones of panic" he had employed. Salisbury issued a forthright challenge.

what I do earnestly protest against is that panic-producing speeches should be made at public dinners by public men. The Adjutant-General is a Member of this House. If he thinks his duty forces him to make such statements as these, let him come down here and make them, and we will answer them.¹

Lord Wolseley learned of the Prime Minister's attack upon him only by reading the newspapers the following day. It was not his manner to avoid battle, and he wrote directly to the Prime Minister, warning him that he would appear to defend himself in the House of Lords at the earliest opportunity. This was to be Wolseley's maiden speech in the House of Lords, for he had hitherto refrained from speaking owing to his position in the War Office. But Wolseley probably welcomed this opportunity to deliver his "military confession of faith", for he had long been campaigning behind the scenes for a larger and more efficient army. Now he would have an opportunity to appeal to the nation in an atmosphere of full publicity, which he welcomed, for he believed that no Government would "ever take any military precautions at home or abroad until an outraged public opinion forces their hand."²

Over the weekend, advance news of the impending civil-military confrontation circulated through London society and a "large and brilliant" audience anticipated Wolseley's first speech in the House of Lords on the morning of May 14, 1888. The Times recorded that the passages and galleries were filled even before the opening hour, and Salisbury himself

1. Hansard. (Lords) 11 May 1888. cols. 6-7.

2. Ardagh MSS. PRO 30/40/2 Wolseley to Ardagh. 3 November 1894.

later recalled that "I do not remember ever seeing the House, either on the benches or in the Galleries, so full as it was on that occasion."¹

Before this vast and crowded audience, Wolseley delivered a long and dignified speech which set forth his views on the poor state of the national defences. He reasserted his conviction that

The position of England, at the present moment, as regards its Army, is very unsatisfactory, and if a hostile force were to land upon our shores of say, 100,000 men, there is no reason why these 100,000 men, if properly led, should not take possession of London ... our military forces are not organized or equipped as they should be to guarantee even the safety of the capital in which we are at the present moment.²

Wolseley emphasised that his misgivings over the state of British defences were shared by "nine out of every ¹⁰ soldiers and sailors whose opinions are worth having" - the very men who would command British forces by land and sea in any future war. If his views, however, were embarrassing to the Government, he would resign.³ Salisbury was quick to reject any suggestion of Wolseley's resigning, and it was apparent that Wolseley's speech had had a profound effect on him. The Cabinet itself, he announced, would sit as a Committee of Inquiry into this "grave statement".

it shall receive the closest possible attention and examination we can give to it with the assistance of the illustrious Duke, the noble and gallant Lord himself, and the Secretary of State for War. I cannot at all coincide with those who think these matters can be referred to any body outside the Government.⁴

Wolseley's appeal to public opinion was an immense success. The Times leader applauded his "dignified and impressive speech", as did the

1. Times. 15 May 1888. p. 9. Hansard. (Lords) 7 March 1889. col. 1114.

2. Hansard. (Lords) 14 May 1888. cols. 100-101.

3. Hansard. (Lords) 14 May 1888. col. 102.

4. Ibid. Col. 104.

Daily Telegraph.¹ The Daily Telegraph in addition continued to run a series of alarming articles outlining the dangers of invasion, warning that "if France lands a force here, it will consist of trained regular troops, highly instructed, magnificently armed, equipped, and fitted for desperate war. We cannot oppose it with a half-armed, half-drilled mass of men."² Articles in the Contemporary Review and The Broad Arrow praised Wolseley's exposure of the nation's military weakness, and the Nineteenth Century and Colburn's United Service Magazine featured articles on the likelihood of invasion.³ The Duke of Cambridge himself delivered a speech on the danger that had arisen as a result of the nation's military weakness in relation to the Continent.⁴ The national security had become a public question of the first importance and a contemporary writer testified that

We must go back eighty years to find the public opinion of this country as much agitated on the subject of national defence as at the present time. Sensational scenes in the usually calm arena of the House of Lords, resolutions with regard to Imperial Defence being moved by the First Lord of the Treasury in the House of Commons, the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry by the Government, and meetings in the City, have all lately indicated how deeply the national mind is moved.⁵

Similar observations were made in other journals of opinion.⁶

The change in the editorial approach by Punch to the invasion scare is

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1. Times. 15 May 1888, p.9; Daily Telegraph. 15 May 1888, pp. 5-6.
 2. Daily Telegraph. 12 May 1888, p.5; 10 May 1888, p.4; 11 May 1888, p.5; 14 May 1888, p.5; 21 May 1888, p.5.
 3. Henry Dunkley. "National Defence." Contemporary Review. June 1888, pp. 885-901; "Lord Wolseley's Red Letter Day." Broad Arrow. 19 May 1888, p.609; "The Question of Imperial Safety." Nineteenth Century. June 1888, pp. 789-798; 799-808; "The Defence of London." Colburn's United Service Magazine. June 1888, pp. 148-153.
 4. "The Duke of Cambridge at Liverpool." Times 18 May 1888, p.10.
 5. Col. H.M. Hozier. "Our Actual Military Strength." Nineteenth Century. June 1888, p.802.
 6. National Review. June 1888. pp. 567-69; R.U.S.I. Journal. July 1888. pp. 716-17; Lt. Col. A.T. Higgins. "The Invasion Scare of 1888." Colburn's United Service Magazine. October 1888, pp. 259-269.

an instructive reflection of aroused public opinion. At first the magazine had made light of the agitation, producing a

Mr. Punch's Alarmist Alphabet, Dedicated to our
Naval and Military experts to whose warnings our
Rulers attach no particular importance.

A's the Alarm that the country's defenceless
B's the belief such assertions are senseless (etc.)

A comic invasion story was published which ended with 50,000 French and

German troops in possession of London and the cession of Tussaud's Wax
Museum to France.¹ As the scare progressed, however, the question of

invasion was treated with more seriousness. A large cartoon depicted
Britannia as "The Unprotected Female" standing at bay in the midst of a
wasteland of defective military equipment, armed only with patriotism.

"Mr. Punch" is made to appear at a Cabinet Meeting, demanding that they
equip the army with repeating rifles, institute conscription to obtain
half-a-million soldiers, and begin the construction of rifle ranges and
drill grounds throughout the country. He hints that if the Cabinet will
not initiate these measures, they must make way for those who will.² One
home defence enthusiast suggested in a service journal that a game of
"Invasion" be popularised,

to lead civilians ~~to take~~ an interest in the general
question of the possibility of the desecration of Old
England by the foot of an enemy: then, as a consequence
of the realisation of this lamentable possibility, to
use their influence, in and out of season, towards the
attainment of a clear, simple, and intelligent system
of defence for our coasts, arsenals, and metropolis ...³

1. Punch. 19 May 1888. pp. 230-231; see also 26 May 1888, pp. 237, 242.

2. Ibid. 26 May 1888. pp. 247, 249.

3. Lt. Henry Chamberlain, R.N. (Ret.) "The Game of Invasion." Colburn's
United Service Magazine. November 1888. p.3.

The invasion scare certainly was in the interests of the War Office, and most military authorities would probably have agreed with the advice offered in Colburn's United Service Magazine, regarding "The Defence of London".

advantage should be taken of the alarm caused by the appearance of exaggerated statements and sensational articles. Such awakenings to a consciousness of national insecurity are transient, and are followed by periods of blind and unreasoning confidence. It will be in the future as it has been in the past; the pendulum of public opinion and feeling, when released from the influence that swayed it to the side of excessive alarm, will oscillate again to the side of groundless security. If advantage be not taken of the present period of wholesome apprehension of danger to effect something of a permanent character, we shall soon¹ relapse into our usual state of unpreparedness for war.

But the evocation of the perils of invasion by Wolseley and Hamley on behalf of a larger army and a London defence scheme were not to go unchallenged, however, for a parallel movement was developing on behalf of the Navy. In February 1888 the flamboyant Lord Charles Beresford, one of the most popular Admirals in the fleet, had resigned from the Board of Admiralty and subsequently entered the House of Commons. Beresford charged that the Admiralty had failed to plan for war, and that the Fleet was insufficient to stand up against the attack of two allied enemies. He and his followers demanded that the fleet be enlarged by 70 ships to bring it up to what later became known as the "Two Power Standard."² By early May Beresford had attracted a number of eminent figures to his movement and announced a series of public meetings in London to inquire

1. Col. H.M. Hozier. Ibid. June 1888. p.153.

2. A.J. Marder. British Naval Policy 1880-1905. Putnam, London, 1940. pp. 133-134. See also Beresford's paper: Cab 37/18/45 "War Organization". October 1886. p.2.

into the state of national defences, especially the Navy. The executive committee of his "non-political" movement included William Laird Clowes, the naval writer, Admiral P.H. Colomb, Captain Sir John Colomb, Captain Penrose Fitzgerald, and Admiral Sir Geoffrey Hornby.¹ Among the speakers at the first meeting of Beresford's organization - held the same day as Wolseley's debate with the Prime Minister in the House of Lords - were Lord Wemyss, an old supporter of the Volunteers, Admiral Sir Spencer Robinson, and H.O. Arnold-Forster, later to be Financial Secretary of the Admiralty and Secretary of State for War. Beresford himself raised the possibility of invasion in the event of war with France and Russia, owing to the inadequacy of the fleet, and other speakers declared that the fleet, in its present condition, could not maintain a position of safety for the country. Appeals were made for an inquiry into the state of the national defences, which would be independent of the Government. Beresford was careful to stress that the fleet alone could prevent invasion, for he asserted that "if we put 5,000,000 men under arms, the enemy would not attack them, they would simply stop their food supplies." Invasion was primarily a naval question, and the fleet was the first defence against it.² The "navalists" received the support of the Times, which argued that "It is mainly on the Navy that the country must rely to secure it from invasion If this is not admitted, there is, as our Correspondent forcibly argues, only one alternative - conscription

1. "City National Defence Meeting". Times 10 May 1888. p. 12.

2. "The National Defences." Ibid. 15 May 1888. p. 10.
Admiral Penrose Fitzgerald. From Sail to Steam. Edward Arnold, London, 1916. pp. 156-166.

and a home standing army of 300,000 men." It condemned Wolseley and his allies for failing to recognize that defence against invasion was more a naval than a military question.¹ Beresford and his colleagues filled the correspondence columns of the Times with their complaints over the dangerous neglect of the Fleet, and counter-attacks upon those who criticized their "Discreditable panic" and "unpatriotic agitation."²

It was not long before the navalists were to receive additional powerful support in the developing invasion controversy between the protagonists of the two services. On May 18, four days after Wolseley's passage of arms with the Prime Minister in the House of Lords and the first of Beresford's public meetings in the City of London, a technical paper delivered by a retired Admiral in a lecture hall marked the beginning of the rise of a great school of strategy which was to contend with the spectre of invasion for the next thirty years, and eventually transform the character of the debate over British national defence. The speaker was Admiral Philip Howard Colomb, one of Beresford's collaborators, who had gained a reputation as an expert on naval strategy.³ Since his retirement from the Royal Navy in 1886, Admiral Colomb had begun to give increasing thought to the strategic questions involved in the invasion of England as a result of the agitation being carried on in the service journals and other periodicals by Hamley and his followers for the defence of London. Now, by a happy

1. Times. 25 May 1888, p.9; See also leader of 19 May 1888, p.11; Saturday Review. 5 May 1888, pp. 519-520; 12 May 1888, pp. 549-550; 19 May 1888, 19 May 1888, pp. 532-533.

2. Times. 22 May 1888, p. 6; 23 May 1888, p.11; 7 June 1888, p.6; 18 May 1888, p.10; 19 May 1888, p. 9.

3. A full account of Admiral Philip Colomb's life and career may be found in Donald M. Schurmann. The Education of a Navy. Cassell, London, 1965. pp. 36-59. Much of this same material is traversed by Professor Schurmann from the viewpoint of naval history. Here it is treated from the viewpoint of interservice controversy and its influence on higher defence policy.

coincidence, the Admiral found himself ready to deliver his first great critique of the invasion bogey at the very height of public interest and controversy. The occasion was a lecture at the Royal United Service Institution, founded in the middle of the century as a forum for discussion of naval and military questions, and by tradition the only place where serving officers of the Army and Navy could speak publicly, and freely about the greater issues of their profession.

The Institute provided the only important arena where purely military problems could be discussed intellectually and in a moderately open way. For its devotees it was a propaganda machine and a substitute for a war college. Men who could not turn to the universities for help in solving modern problems turned to it for informed discussion. Indeed, the R.U.S.I. was, despite a certain ineptness in the comparison, the university of the services. It was due to the Colombs and other like-minded men who followed them that there was some discussion of what armies and weapons were for, and that time was not all spent discussing how armies and weapons worked.¹

The R. U. S. I. was in a commanding position as the only major and semi-official platform for interservice debate and strategic discussion. Admiral Philip Colomb and his 'brother and chief ideological ally, Captain Sir John Colomb,² were well placed to launch a revisionist school of strategy, for they both had the important advantage of having chairs on the R.U.S.I.'s governing Council, which decided which papers would be presented at the Institution's frequent public lectures. The strategic debate over the higher questions involved in an enemy invasion of England began, and to a large degree continued, in the R.U.S.I. lecture hall, and the ensuing

^{p M Schürmann}
1. The Education of a Navy. Cassell, London, 1965. p.8-9.

2. For a biography, see Ibid., pp. 16-35.

arguments between the proponents of the two services were faithfully recorded verbatim in the pages of the R.U.S.I. Journal.

Admiral Colomb's own ideas regarding invasion seem to have come together with a startling rapidity. Although he mentioned in the course of his lectures that he had given much thought to the issue since his retirement in 1886, it was only in February 1888 that he made the first public comments which indicated what was to come. Colomb was inclined to be crusty and pedagogical in temperament, and on this first occasion as on many others which were to follow, he was stung into action as a result of hearing views propounded by an army officer whose paper enlarged on the evils of a possible invasion. The offender on this first occasion was Colonel Sir Charles Nugent of the Royal Engineers, who was one of the central activists in the agitation for a fortified London. Nugent's paper, entitled 'Thoughts Upon Invasion..', stated the traditional alarmists' case for invasion in all its intensity, and presented the usual catalogue of horrors: the rapid and unexpected landing, the sudden dash on London past unready defenders and forts, and implied disaster. Nugent attacked "the infatuation and imbecility of successive governments" in not providing more strongholds and fortresses at the coast and around London.

In the discussion which followed, Admiral Colomb took issue with Nugent's assumptions, and suggested that invasion, which formed only part of Nugent's paper, should be the subject of a detailed separate study. In response to the demands of the fortifications school in home defence, Colomb pointed to the failure of all the fortresses and military defences against invasion in the past, and contrasted them with the successful record of the Fleet. Colomb had appropriated the record of the past to contradict the

alarmists' views of the future. Most galling of all, he quoted Nugent's own words, that England's existing fortifications would require six weeks' work before they could fire a shot, in support of his contention that money spent on passive defence was money wasted. To Colomb, the most ridiculous aspect of the situation was that those who knew the poor condition of the existing forts best were now advocating that more of the same be constructed.

All over the country, in every coast town, in every commercial centre in the United Kingdom at the present moment, there is a sort of propaganda which has set itself up, which is frightening the country into the idea that it is to suffer all kinds of attacks which it has not been used to in previous history.¹

Referring to the invasion scare, Colomb charged that this "extraordinary fear" was without any basis in historical experience: all the ideas of the home defence enthusiasts were based on the assumption that Britain had lost command of the sea. Colomb referred to specific historical examples that to point out, in fact, invasion had never been attempted unless command of the sea was gained. The exception was the attempt of the Great Armada of 1588, and this had failed precisely because Spain did not have command of the sea. Colomb concluded his remarks by noting that his views had been forming on this subject for some time, and promised to raise them again more extensively in a few weeks.²

The Admiral was followed by his brother, Captain Sir John Colomb, who dilated upon the "labyrinth of details and the wilderness of alarms" underlying Nugent's paper. Papers such as these, he charged, arose from the fact that the public mind was in a fog, because the nation had "lost the power of grasping great and wide national principles of defence". In

1. Col. Charles Nugent. "...Thoughts upon Invasion.." R.U.S.I. Journal. (1888) p. 165.

2. Ibid. pp. 166-168.

this he was almost certainly right, for the successive invasion panics of the 19th century were proof that Englishmen simply had not assimilated the lessons of their own recent past. Captain Colomb advocated that the experts at the R.U.S.I. fix upon and elucidate some principle which would mobilize intelligent public opinion, and bring it to bear on the main issues of national strategy. The public certainly could not be blamed for its confusion when it was plain that even the experts were disagreed over fundamentals. The first thing, Captain Colomb declared, was to decide whether the chief danger would come by land or sea. He stated his own belief that invasion was not as likely as investment: that is, an enemy would sooner blockade England if he had command of the sea, and starve the nation into surrender, rather than commit himself to the hazardous course of actually landing a force to capture London. Colomb called for a general meeting of the R.U.S.I. where the question would be put, presumably discussed, and then put to the vote by naval and military experts. Colomb concluded with a broadside of questions to which he invited the fortification lobby to reply: what was the estimated size of the expected invading force? What would be its transport? From what ports would it start? What capacity did these have? etc.¹ Captain Colomb's challenge was designed to force the 'invasionists' to return to first principles and clothe the ghost of invasion in the garment of concrete naval realities. In this he was not immediately successful. The meeting was so taken by the onslaught of the Colomb brothers that no reply was given. Colonel Nugent in his summary remarked that his first impulse had been to walk out by the door,

1. Col. Charles Nugent. "... Thoughts upon Invasion.." R.U.S.I. Journal (1888) p. 170.

so great had been the hornet's nest about his ears. He observed that part of the problem was that the two services started from different points in regard to the invasion.¹ He did not add any account of why they should end at different points, nor did he suggest how the gap between them might be bridged. His summary was garnished with frequent interruptions and impromptu debates with the Colomba. It was obvious that there was a strong body of opinion in both services violently opposed to that of the sister department, regarding the most vital strategic problem facing Britain.

Admiral Colomb's promised full paper on the invasion question was read on May 18th, four days after Salisbury and Wolseley created a national stir by their impromptu debate in the House of Lords. Public interest was probably at its height, and the lecture hall was crowded, with many Generals and Admirals in attendance. That this was recognised as an unusually important occasion may be seen in the contemporary comments on the many ladies present.² Colomb entitled his paper "The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom", and began with a carefully-constructed case indicating the almost complete predominance of military thinking in regard to the contingency of invasion. He had made a careful statistical study: in recent years, 17 papers had appeared in the R.U.S.I. Journal on the defence of Britain against overseas attack. Of these, only four had even referred to the Navy as a defence, and only one had dealt with the Fleet at length. Admiral Colomb then went on to draw the contrast between the melancholy and defensive mentality of his own time, and the vigorous and assertive strategy that had preserved the

1. Col. Charles Nugent. "... Thoughts upon Invasion..." R.U.S.I. Journal (1888) p. 173.

2. Rear-Admiral P.H. Colomb. "The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom". Ibid. p. 586.

island Kingdom at the time of the Napoleonic wars, which assumed that the enemy coast was the British border. This had been the foundation doctrine of Lord St. Vincent's "triple defence" policy against invasion. The first line had been a close blockade of French ports, while a second fleet waited at a Reserve station in the Channel. If somehow small enemy forces eluded both these Fleets, a third force of coast defence vessels was stationed to destroy these remnants. A "triple naval bulwark" had thus prevailed against invasion. Admiral Colomb's technique of appealing to the history of the Napoleonic Wars was calculated to appeal to a nation which prided itself on its past, and most of all, upon that period. Earl Cowper, the Chairman, expressed this pride later in thanking Admiral Colomb for "calling us back to that golden period which every Englishman must look back to with pride and pleasure."¹

Colomb in his paper intimated that the system of defence against French invasion, sanctified by the hard usage of the longest and most demanding war Britain had ever fought, had been abandoned in the course of the long peace which followed. The Royal Commission of 1860, which had sanctioned £12 million for fortifications had in contrast been staffed by a preponderance of military men who had made their decisions in an atmosphere of panic rather than war. The same influences were at work, the Admiral charged, behind a recent committee which had recommended the construction of new forts at the Thames, Medway, and Harwich.² The Admiral's indictment was later enlarged upon by his brother, Captain Sir John Colomb, who commented on the results of the thirty years of

1. Rear-Admiral P.H. Colomb. "The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom." Ibid. p. 599.

2. Ibid. p. 670-671.

thinking in passive defence which had followed the 1860 Commission.

if you compare foreign navies with our navies, if you compare the whole tone and mind of the public during those thirty years, you will find that your naval strength has relatively declined, and the country has more and more been tending to rely upon fixed fortifications. The fact is, nine men out of ten in England now understand something about the military policy of this country, but if they are asked about naval policy they are in a complete fog and have no rational notions at all.¹

Admiral Colomb admitted, that he had once, like most naval and military men of the day, subscribed to the prevailing belief that the advent of steam had made the lessons of previous naval history relevant. But since his retirement two years before, his historical studies had led him to the opposite conclusion.² Steam had not bridged the Channel, as Wellington and Palmerston had supposed. It had made invasion rather than much more difficult. Although steam made the organization of an invasion a little easier, Colomb argued, it had increased the defenders' power to move and concentrate his Fleets even more. Colomb emphasized that steam had confirmed the balance of naval power, and quoted heavily from the few naval battles by steam warships to underline his main contention that steam had not altered strategy.³ The Admiral argued that whatever organization existed during the Crimean War was owing to British command of the sea and the smoothness of the arrangements carried out by steam warships.

If it be true, as undoubtedly it is, that combinations for attack can be more suddenly and with less warning put into action; it is also true that the time which can

1. Rear-Admiral P.H. Colomb. "The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom". R.U.S.I. Journal (1888) p. 589.

2. Ibid. p. 576.

3. Ibid. (1889) p. 158.

be allowed for the attack, before it is interrupted, is very much limited, and the limit is very much more sharply drawn.¹

Technology had aided the defence against overseas attack in other areas. The telegraph, for example, made a surprise attack virtually impossible. If by some miracle the elaborate preparations in enemy harbours for invasion had escaped the notice of England, the telegraph would still enable her naval forces to be alerted and sent to the scene of landing as soon as the enemy fleet was seen approaching the English coast. Colomb did not carry his argument to its logical conclusion in general terms. It is probably true that technological advance always redounds to the advantage of the superior power, other factors being equal, for it enables him to use his superior force with greater speed and effectiveness. The progress of invention, by contrast, works against the aggressor in overseas operations, for it requires him to carry more and more delicate and complicated equipment across hostile seas, and to go through the complications of unloading it during disembarkation. British naval power had made possible the invasion of the Crimea by Franco-British forces. By contrast, the Italian debacle at Lissa in 1865 had resulted from their attempting invasion before securing command of the sea. The surprise appearance of the inferior Austrian fleet caught the Italians at an embarrassing moment in the midst of disembarkation, and encountered for their annihilation. This was due to the fact that the Italians had ignored the existence of the 'flanking fleet', or as it later became known, the "fleet in being". The French in 1870 had wisely called off a raid on the German coast on the mere receipt of a rumour that a small

1. Colomb, "The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom". R.U.S.I. Journal (1889) . p. 158,

German force had put to sea. Both these incidents illustrated the Admiral's teaching that even an inferior force could wreak havoc if an invasion was in progress. The implication was plain: if invasion were to succeed, it would have to be carried out by a naval force of overwhelming superiority. The general lesson was that no invasion had ever succeeded when the command of the sea was in dispute. The Armada had failed in its object, because it had ignored the inferior British fleet. Other attempts, the most notable of which was Napoleon's of 1805, had been called off in wise recognition of this fact.

However, Admiral Colomb reserved his most severe strictures for those who constructed their scenarios of future disaster on the assumption that the Fleet might disappear, or be "decoyed away". The favourite case quoted here was the alleged luring of Nelson's fleet to the West Indies in 1805. Colomb erected an elaborate historical argument showing that Nelson had in fact been following a main French fleet. He challenged those who based their whole view of home defence upon strategic failure of the Fleet to "show distinctly how and where the failure is likely to take place."¹

The reaction of Colomb's audience was mixed. The soldiers seem to have found it difficult to follow the Admiral's argument, probably because it was so divorced from their defensive-oriented, passive land defence mentality. Even certain Admirals confessed to bewilderment. But Admiral Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton, soon to be installed as First Sea Lord, saw the practical side of Colomb's doctrines. The command of the sea must not be lost, and the hatred of France and Russia necessitated a two power standard.

1. Colomb. "The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom". R.U.S.I. Journal (1888) p. 579.

Britain, he said, should not build warships according to preconceived notions of economy but according to the naval forces available to potential foes. Britain had lost command of the sea before with grave consequences: she could not afford to do so again.¹

Colonel (later General) Brackenbury, Director of Military Intelligence, thought he saw through Colomb's paper.

.. the arguments of the gallant lecturer would logically lead to reduction of the army, to the abolition of the militia, and to sending the volunteers to inglorious ease in their homes. If the fleet is to defend the country without the aid of the Army, which he appears to advocate, then there is no occasion for the home defence forces.²

Colomb protested on this and other occasions that this was not his position, for he believed that history had taught that small raids were still possible even assuming British command of the sea, as small enemy forces might elude the most vigilant watch. As the debate developed in sophistication between the two services, the point of disagreement centred on the extent of the defence on shore considered necessary.³ Extremists who talked of the Navy as the first, last, and only defence against invasion, were not orthodox followers of what became known as the Blue Water School. But there does appear to be a certain accommodation in Admiral Colomb's early position on the raid question, for he gave full sanction to the existing home defence force of 400,000, a force certainly not compatible with the small and

1. Rear-Admiral P.H. Colomb. "The Naval Defences of the United Kingdom". R.U.S.I. Journal (1888) p. 587.

2. Ibid. p. 593.

3. Marder. Op. Cit. p. 74

disconnected raids he saw as possible against the English coast. Colomb was probably unsure during this period over the extent of British naval supremacy, as the fleet was still relatively weak.

The speed with which Admiral Philip Colomb had organised the arguments of the Blue Water School was phenomenal, and the main doctrines, once laid down, were modified only in detail.¹ The speed of the creation of the navalist ideology was paralleled by the speed of their dissemination within the Senior Service, and literate sectors of British society. The virtual conversion of a large part of the thinking public to Colomb's doctrines within a few years can be partially explained by the dynamics of the situation: a traditional bias towards the Navy, and national interest in defence questions brought on by repeated navalist campaigns for a larger Fleet, and a growing agitation on the part of the War Office on behalf of a fortified London. To this situation the Colomb brothers brought several specific advantages: an already-established reputation as serious analysts of strategy, reinforced by the vigour, clarity, and apparent thoroughness of their arguments as well as the prestige of their position as Members of the Council of the R.U.S.I. By using the lecture hall of the eminent Royal United Services Institution as a platform, they insured that the new navalism would be assured of a hearing at the very apex of English Society, as well as among that small, but intelligent, zealous, and strategically-placed community of naval officers who had a vested interest in promoting an ideology which preached the necessity for a larger fleet.

1. By 1891, Admiral Colomb had softened his attitude against coast forts to the extent that he admitted they had a delaying role against invasion. Schurmann. Op. Cit. pp. 54-55

From the beginning the new navalism enjoyed strong support from powerful and influential naval officers. Among those who congratulated Admiral Colomb on his first invasion paper were Admiral Sir George Eliot, Commander-in-Chief of the Portsmouth station, who later that year (1888) published a textbook on naval tactics; Admiral Sir Edward Fanshawe, Captain (later Admiral) Penrose Fitzgerald; Admiral Sir Spencer Robinson, a former First Sea Lord; and Admiral Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton, who became First Sea Lord in 1889.¹

Besides the support of these eminent naval officers, the Blue Water ideology enjoyed the patronage of the Times, the most influential paper in Britain, from the very beginning. Following Colomb's lectures, the Times devoted a three-column leading article commending his philosophy to its readers and to the Government.² During the invasion controversy, the Times gave consistent editorial support to Colomb's plea for a "Higher Policy of Defence" which would embrace the needs and capabilities of both services, based on a confident trust in the Navy's ability to defend the country. It claimed that the only alternative was conscription and a large standing home army.³ The Colombes and their supporters appeared at will in the Times correspondence columns.

1. R.U.S.I. Journal. (1888) pp. 585-593.

2. Times. 19 May 1888. p. 11.

3. Ibid. 25 May 1888, p. 9; also 30 May 1888, p. 13; 5 June 1888, p. 9.

4. Ibid. 19 May 1888, p. 9; 23 May 1888, p. 11; 25 May 1888, p. 8.

The military protagonists of invasion remained unimpressed, however. The day following Colomb's paper, General Hamley delivered a lengthy speech in the House of Commons. He contended that "ships were, by their nature,

precarious defences" and speculated that

it might be well worth the risk of an enemy's force to make a dash on London, careless of its communications, if it could reach its object; but it would be quite a different thing to find, on landing, that it was confronted with a strong defensive line, while the fleet might return and cut off its retreat by sea.¹

The War Office and prominent officers of both services were now committed in the invasion controversy; it was only inevitable that the Admiralty also should have become involved, for Wolseley's and Hamley's allegations as to the ease of invasion reflected severely upon the professional competence of the Navy. On June 4, Lord George Hamilton, the First Lord of the Admiralty, delivered a lengthy reply to Wolseley's statement regarding a hypothetical invasion of 100,000 Frenchmen, which he noted had caused great "commotion and perturbation" among the public. Wolseley's force, Hamilton declared, would require 480,000 tons of shipping, more than the total tonnage available to Germany, and within 20,000 tons of the total shipping available to France. To carry out invasion France would have to bring together every ship she possessed, leaving her coasts and the Mediterranean stripped of their naval defences. Even so, there were no ports sufficient to accommodate such a monstrous armada, and a complete breakdown would result in the French maritime service. Even Great Britain, with her vastly superior naval facilities, would require three weeks to organize and outfit an expedition of this scale.² Sir John Colomb followed, condemning military authorities who had made such unwarranted statements without

1. Hansard (Commons) 15 May 1888. col. 436.

2. Ibid (Lords) 4 June 1888. cols. 1068-1069.

pausing to consider the naval side of the question.¹

The Times leader congratulated the First Lord in having so effectively disposed of Wolseley's "sensational statements" and underscored the Colombs' point that invasion was essentially a naval issue.

What a force of 100,000 men could do if it were securely established on our shores is doubtless a question for military men to determine. But it does not seem to have occurred to them to consider how this force could be transported across the Channel ... These are considerations which military alarmists are very prone to overlook ... It is clear that in putting forth such a statement the military authorities must have totally neglected the naval conditions of the case.²

The "military alarmists", however, were hardly cowed into silence. Hanley wrote straightaway to the Times, representing that he could hardly believe that Lord Hamilton and Captain Colomb were in earnest in so lightly disposing of the invasion menace. The First Lord's arguments, he charged, implied that the enemy would be confined to crossing in steamships of the largest size in a single trip. He quoted Napoleon and recounted his own experiences at the landing in the Crimea in 1854 to indicate that invasion and landing could be a swift and facile operation. Wolseley, for his part, delivered a short and pithy reply to the First Lord while acting as Chairman for a discussion on military training at the R.U.S.I., alleging that "his informants have misled him in a most discreditable manner." The Admiralty estimate of 480,000 tons transport for an invading army of 100,000 was grossly optimistic; 150,000 tons would suffice to provide this force with a voyage across the Channel in "far greater luxury than any foreign nation

1. Hansard (Lords) 4 June 1888, col. 1097.

2. Times 5 June 1888, p.9

would think of providing." Wolseley stated that his figures were based on authoritative calculations made by a joint meeting of the War Office and the Admiralty. The picture painted by the First Lord of the great difficulty of invasion was far from the truth, in fact, Wolseley emphasized, "in the ports of France at this moment, and every day in the year, there is enough shipping to carry over 100,000 men to England." Wolseley repeated this statement, declaring that he had "A full sense of my responsibility in making it."¹

The invasion controversy, which had begun as a civil-military confrontation, had now developed into an inter-service row of the first magnitude. The Times delivered a long homily on the subject.

There is only one conclusion which the public will not hesitate to draw from the controversy now being carried on in our own columns and upon public platforms concerning the possibilities of invasion. That conclusion is that we are far from well served by our naval and military authorities, who have not only failed, on their own showing, to construct a coherent and intelligible policy of national defence, co-ordinating and harmonising the operations of both departments, but are actually in hopeless disagreement about the data upon which such a policy must be based.

Wolseley especially was singled out for censure for a "want of intellectual sincerity which leaves the bare dynamics of defence in obscurity and confusion," but both pronouncements were branded as "rhetorical exaggerations intended to snatch an argumentative advantage in a departmental dispute."² Other journals of opinion expressed their dismay that the estimate of the Admiralty should be more than three times that of the War Office. The Daily News commented: "Either LORD WOLSELEY must be squeezing

1. R.U.S.I. Journal. (1888) pp. 727-728.

2. Times. 7 June 1888. p.9

his invaders very tight, or the First Lord of the Admiralty is giving each of them a state-room to himself."¹

Repeated questions were posed in the House of Commons regarding the discrepancy of views between the two services.² Lord Hamilton was forced to admit that the Admiralty and War Office had not held a joint conference on the subject for thirteen years. Wolseley, he claimed, had based his calculations on the 1875 conference, while his own had been based "on the result of more modern experience." Wolseley's figures moreover, were

... not for moving to a hostile country, but from an English port to one friendly port across the Channel, in which case it would be insured that the troops and horses could be disembarked at once. Moreover, it assumes that no opposition from a hostile fleet need be taken into consideration."

The Admiralty calculation, however, took into consideration the only conditions under which the taking of London would be possible: the embarkation of an army simultaneously from several ships, equipped with horses and transport for rapid movement.³ The Cabinet also were concerned over the inter-service disarray, and considered a proposal to set up a single Ministry of Defence which would coordinate British defence, and break down the isolation and competition of the two departments. It contained a revolutionary suggestion to divide the division of available funds between the two services according to the vote of the

1. Public Opinion. 8 June 1888.

2. Hansard (Commons) 5 June 1888, col. 404; 7 June 1888, cols. 1414-15; 11 June 1888, cols. 1700-3; 12 June 1888, cols. 1803-1831.

3. Ibid., 11 June 1888, cols. 1701-02; 5 June 1888, col. 404.

House of Commons.¹ Nothing came of this programme, but the invasion affair had made manifest the great need to bring together the competitive views and policies of the two departments.

On June 29th Lord Wemyss initiated an important debate in the House of Lords by moving a resolution that the Government provide additional funds for national defence, in view of the increased armaments of foreign nations and the various statements of Wolseley, the Duke of Cambridge, and high naval authorities as to the danger of the country. He declared himself an admitted alarmist, defining panic "As that temporary waking up of the nation from that deep chronic sleep into which it was thrown by the mesmeric passes of Ministerial manipulation."² Wolseley followed Wemyss with an unrepentant attack on the Admiralty, insisting that it was a well-known fact

that this country is at all times liable to invasion. The question of invasion has been studied most deeply by all the great soldiers of the century and .. so frequently considered that it would require courage amounting almost to temerity on the part of anyone to stand up in this House or in any other public assembly and express views contrary..³

He questioned the First Lord's "most erroneous and most misleading statement" that invasion was an absurdity and repeated his warning that

there is now, at this moment and every day of the year, in the ports of France ample shipping and tonnage to bring that army across the Channel I contend that it would be the very easiest possible operation for the French Authorities, if they wished to do so, to collect 100,000 men, with an Artillery consisting of 300 guns, in the ports bordering on the Channel in one night, without even informing the men who were to be embarked as to their destination; and your Lordships are well aware how short a time it would take to cross the Channel.⁴

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1. Cab 37/21/19 "Coordination of naval and military administration." unsigned manuscript. 29 June 1888.
 2. Hansard (Lords) 29 June 1888. col. 1684.
 3. Ibid. col. 1685.
 4. Ibid. col. 1687.

Salisbury replied on behalf of the Cabinet, that

the matter has been under the anxious consideration of the Government in communication with the authorities of the War Office and Admiralty. Stating the problem as the noble and gallant Viscount has stated it, I can safely say that we have received from no authority any indication that a danger such as he states it exists.¹

Such a surprise was impossible; in fact, the experts of the Admiralty regarded Wolseley's apprehensions as "little short of ridiculous." The Prime Minister expressed his weariness of experts who could not agree among themselves. Only the Cabinet could initiate action and conduct inquiry into the question of invasion, and as it had constituted itself a Board of Inquiry, it could best carry out its duties without pressure from below. Salisbury tried to account for the disagreement between the two services.

It was simply a question of definition: the Admiralty figures had been for a thoroughly equipped force for the purpose of landing in the face of an army, equipped with boats, horses, guns, and everything which such an army would require. Of course, if you do not add all these equipments, and pack them like herrings, I think it very possible that 180,000 tons would carry 100,000 men.²

The Prime Minister concluded, with discernible irritation.

May I hope that, now we have threshed out what the meaning of the two Departments is, this duel will end? I do not think it is desirable that we should discuss in all its details for the benefit of our neighbours the precise mode in which we expect them to attack us, and in which we intend to defend ourselves; and I should be very grateful if the noble and gallant Viscount would use his official knowledge rather to guide us than to correct us. I am afraid that if chastisement is the proof of love, the love of the noble and gallant Viscount overflows all bounds.³

The French ambassador, who was an interested spectator of the above proceed--

1. Hansard (Lords) 29 June 1888. col. 1706.

2. Ibid. col. 1707.

3. Ibid. cols. 1707-08.

ings, reported to Paris that even though a French invasion was a vain chimera, it appeared that nothing would stop the movement to augment Britain's military forces. But if the Prime Minister and his Cabinet in their study shed any light on the possibility of a French invasion and French intentions, he would render the two countries a considerable service.¹

While the controversy had been raging between the two departments in public, the Cabinet, led by Salisbury, had begun its confidential inquiry into the possibility of invasion. Salisbury had once said "If you believe the doctors, nothing is wholesome; if you believe the theologians, nothing is innocent; if you believe the soldiers, nothing is safe."² But now Salisbury was taking the question of national security very seriously indeed, and was, in fact, the moving force behind the Cabinet's examination of the problem. He had initiated the official study of the invasion problem with a memorandum on June 6, in which he stipulated that

the examination may be confined to the occupation of London by France, for an attempt by any other Power to conduct such an operation does not seem to be within the widest limits of possibility.

Salisbury believed the invasion operation had five main problems: how would the troops be transported to the French coast, from which ports would they be embarked, where would the French obtain sea transport, where would they land in England, and what plans existed for dealing with the invader if his attack was successful. Salisbury had accepted the

1. Documents diplomatiques francaises. 1er Série, No.7 (1937) No. 155, p. 165.

2. Lady Gwendolyn Cecil. Op.Cit. Vol. II, p.153.

War Office's case for invasion by omitting the factor of British naval opposition, but he put the military authorities on the defensive by directing that

before proceeding to examine more closely the precise point at which the lack of Parliamentary support or administrative assistance has prevented the army from being so organized as to protect London from occupation, I wish to narrow the area of investigation by inviting the War Office to place before us in a concise form the information they already possess with respect to the various conditions under which the hostile movement would have to be undertaken, and also, in detail, the outlined plans of defence which is waiting for the financial means necessary to give them vitality and effect.¹

Salisbury specifically asked for plans for the withdrawal of railway rolling stock from threatened areas, evacuation of horses and livestock, and the destruction of bridges on roads and railways.

The War Office's reply by Major-General Henry Brackenbury, D.M.I., while not referring to these latter questions, provided an authoritative picture of the development of a future invasion. Brackenbury calculated, on the basis of a Naval Intelligence report of the previous spring, that the French could easily mobilize a force of 100,000 within a week and disembark them from Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, Dieppe, le Havre, and Boulogne. Once landed in England,

Any force invading this country would have to act for the first few days as a flying column, and its Commander would not think of encumbering himself with transport. A large force of Infantry would be landed with the machine guns of the fleet, to seize and hold a position covered by the heavy guns of the fleet. Artillery and cavalry would then be landed

1. Cab 37/21/14 "French Invasion: alleged inability of British military organization to protect London." by Salisbury. 6 June 1888. p. 2.

in sufficient numbers to meet any opposition likely to be brought against the force till the ships which had landed the Infantry had made a second trip, bringing more men and more guns. As the venture must have either succeeded or failed within three days, the men would carry nothing but ammunition and food.¹

Each French soldier would carry only 200 rounds and six days' food, for as Brackenbury explained, London itself would provide sufficient supplies and transport. As for possible landing places, there existed five lengths of beach suitable for embarkation along the coastline of Kent and Sussex, and one in Essex. Brackenbury emphasized, however, that invasion would occur only after a decisive defeat of the Royal Navy.

The Admiralty also provided an appreciation of the invasion problem, in which Lord George Hamilton made a considerable retreat from his public position that 100,000 invaders would require 480,000 tons of transport. A newer estimate was that a tonnage of 112,000 would suffice for a theoretical force of 75,000 troops, 10,000 horses, and 200 guns. But the Admiralty shifted its attack to other stages of the invasion operation. Embarkation, instead of taking only a week, as the War Office had maintained, would take twice as long and would paralyze the entire maritime service of France. Once assembled, however, the armada could cross to England in a single night, and if enough boats existed to ferry 10,000 men to the shore at one time, the entire expedition of 75,000 men could conceivably be landed in the course of the next day. The horses would take two days to land if horse boats were available; otherwise they would have to swim ashore. Hydrographic reports indicated that only fifty miles of British coast were suitable for such an operation, which represented a halving of Brackenbury's

1. Cab 37/21/15 "A French Invasion." 8 June 1888. p.1.

estimate. Invasion was mechanically possible, the Admiralty concluded, but only if carried out with the utmost skill and freedom from all unforeseen difficulties and accidental miscalculations. It must be preceded by the utter annihilation of the Mediterranean and Channel Fleets, the destruction of all torpedo-boats and coast defence vessels, and the abandonment of all attempts at defence by British merchant vessels and tugs. The sea would have to be perfectly calm and ideal weather would be required. Moreover, the French fleet, inferior in strength to the British Navy it had just supposedly annihilated, would have to repel all attempts by British land forces to oppose the landing while it was in progress.¹

Salisbury, now armed with two official versions of a possible invasion, now was provided with a third appreciation from an unusual, but eminent and authoritative, source: Field-Marshal Helmut von Moltke, Chief of the German General Staff. Salisbury had ascertained through private sources that an article in the Daily Telegraph had been based on an interview with von Moltke, and had the article printed and circulated to the Cabinet. Von Moltke believed that a surprise invasion by France was possible along the coast between Dover and Portsmouth, and thought the French could collect sufficient shipping at Calais to ship over a force of 20,000 to 30,000 men without the British learning of it. He advised the formation of a coast observation corps, which would give enough warning to provide for the mobilisation of the defence, which could be transported by railway to establish numerical superiority at the decisive point. The attack would have to come in the South of England, for only here was there

1. Cab 37/21/17 "A French Invasion". 19 June 1888, by Lord George Hamilton. pp. 1-2.

sufficient food for the invaders to live off the country. As the French would aim a mortal blow, London was the only possible objective. British adoption of conscription, von Moltke suggested, would greatly improve Britain's strategic position.¹

Salisbury now reviewed the evidence for invasion. There were two possible forms of attack: a surprise assault, and an invasion in force following a naval disaster. Salisbury thus showed he understood the naval dimension of the problem more completely than von Moltke or his military advisors. He believed that

Even though we had lost for a time the command of the Channel, still great havoc might be made in it by vessels of the floating battery class, which could go close in shore. If they could be so built that, while drawing little water, and offering little mark to the guns of the enemy's fleet, they were adequately protected by armour against gun-boats and smaller craft, they might use quick-firing guns and machine-guns with very valuable results upon the heterogeneous transports or collapsible boats of the invader.²

Salisbury also noted that the War Office had not replied to his earlier proposals to destroy transport and supplies in threatened coastal areas. He also asked for military comments upon the adverse report of the Hydrographer, as well as for a detailed schedule of mobilization for home defence. The Admiralty were asked to provide plans for a rapid mobilization of the Reserve Fleet, which could intercept the invasion transports and escort fleet. Resources should be made available to oppose a landing near the shore, presumably with small craft, and arrangements should be made to remove navigational aids near coasts when invasion threatened.³

1. "England in Danger: Opinion in Germany." Daily Telegraph, 23 May 1888. p.3 (reproduced in Cab 37/21/18. "French Invasion." by Salisbury. 29 June 1888. pp. 9-15).

2. Ibid. p.6.

3. Ibid. p.8

Salisbury was skeptical regarding the value of the Volunteers in the defence of London. He pointed out that they, as a half-civil force, might refuse to march to the aid of the capital in the event of a naval disaster, for fear of an enemy attack on their local territory.¹

In mid-July, Colonel Ardagh replied to Salisbury's points, again presenting invasion as a purely military problem. He lamented that
there is not at this moment a single work of permanent character, or a single gun mounted for the protection of London against an invader who had landed on our shores.²

Surprise was certainly possible, and recent developments had made opposition to a landing almost impossible.

A general protection... can no longer be contemplated; nor can we now count upon any extemporized means of opposing an attempt to land upon the beach. The power of a heavily armed and armoured fleet to cover the act of disembarkation has become almost irresistible. It would be futile to send down field guns, or even guns of position, to compete with ordnance of 100 tons, with quick-firing guns and machine rifles, sheltered behind thick plates of steel. In short, the invader must be met, not on the beach, but at least so far from it as to place us on some terms of equality with him.³

Ardagh followed Hamley's recommendation for a field force, which would be anchored to suitable fortifications. Both force and fortifications would be interposed between the invader on the coast and London.

While the War Office here represented that it did not question the axiom that the Fleet was the first line of defence, it was presenting the possibility of a strong French fleet in possession of the Channel. Ardagh used a cost-effectiveness argument designed to appeal to the administration.

1. Daily Telegraph. 23 May 1888. pp 7-8.

2. Ardagh MSS. PRO 30/4713 A138 "Defence of London." 16 July 1888. p.1.

3. Ibid. p. 3.

He estimated that for the cost of one modern ironclad battleship, £500,000, ten permanent forts could be built around London, and provided with modern armament. Likewise the Volunteers cost less per capita than the Regulars or Militia, and therefore should be used more freely. Ardagh asserted that the most economical way to defend London was to employ a combination of forts and Volunteers, and estimated that a suitable system could be evolved for an expenditure of only £480,000. The most likely landing spot was Southend, where considerable facilities for embarkation were available. Ardagh suggested the construction of a floating bridge across the Thames at Tilbury to counter this threat, and to permit the home defence force to pass from one bank of the Thames to the other. This would prevent a force of, say, 30,000 men landing in the Thames and taking London by surprise.¹

In November Salisbury revived the invasion inquiry in the Cabinet, as he feared a Boulanger coup in Paris. He explained in a paper to his colleagues that these considerations derived weight from an approaching political crisis in France, in which power might fall into the hands of a military adventurer. Once established, Salisbury believed Boulanger's principle difficulty will be to find a policy which will unite in his favour a majority of his countrymen; and the destruction of London would probably recommend him to them very strongly.²

The chances of such an adventure succeeding were remote, but not sufficiently so to deter a soldier who had come to power as the result of a revolution. Salisbury outlined the course of the possible French campaign. He had directed British Consuls in the Channel ports to estimate available French tonnage, and found that enough shipping was available for 93,000 men, even

1. Ibid. p.14.

2. Cab 37/22/32 "A French Invasion". 6 November 1888. p.4.

on the basis of the Admiralty calculations. Enough men for a raid on London could be transported to the embarkation ports almost any afternoon without previous notice, simply by halting French railway traffic for half a day. Secrecy could be maintained, as no mail left Paris after 11 in the morning, and the telegraph could be subjected to censorship. Preparations for shipping horses and artillery could have been made in advance and in secrecy at Cherbourg. According to the military authorities, an unopposed landing on the open coast would take no longer than a few hours.

It would be foolish to rely upon the supposed protection of an official declaration of war, for it was notorious that many wars had begun without previous warning. The French might preserve an appearance of legality by sending a notice in a sealed envelope on Saturday night before the time fixed for the landing of the expedition, which would probably not reach the hand of the British Foreign Minister until mid-Sunday, when the aggressors would already be ashore.

If a Saturday night was selected for the operation, and if two or three Irish patriots were employed to cut the telegraph wires at suitable points after 9 o'clock in the evening, a large portion of the expedition might be one day's march upon the road to London before the military authorities in that city were fully aware of what was taking place. The advance to London would presumably consist of four days' forced marches.¹

Both naval and military defences must be prepared. A fixed number of small craft should be kept ready at Dover and Portsmouth, capable of starting at one hour's notice, and the Reserve Fleet should be capable of mobilisation within 48 hours. In addition, Salisbury recommended that a network of watch stations be erected along those sections of the coast believed open to possible landings. However, the disagreement between the two services

1. Cab 37/22/32 "A French Invasion." 6 November 1888. p.3.

was still far from resolved. The Admiralty asserted that a surprise attack was an impossibility, on the basis that sufficient transport could not be collected in French ports without serving advance notice of aggression, while the notion of a descent without warning was a predominant element in War Office planning. Estimates of shipping required remained a bone of contention; the army maintained that one ton per man was sufficient for invasion, the Navy, one-and-a-half tons.

A few days following Salisbury's survey of the invasion problem, Brackenbury forwarded to the Cabinet a more reassuring estimate of the time required for the concentration and embarkation of a French force. Detailed calculations and charts substantiated his conclusion that an army of nearly 100,000, with 12,000 horses and 300 guns, would take eight days to concentrate, and would be opposite the British coast on the ninth day, "weather and the British navy permitting."¹ The War Office proposals for "The Defence of London", presented an elaborate fortification scheme to the Cabinet. Although naval supremacy was Britain's first bulwark against invasion, the soldiers asserted that

our naval supremacy may be paralysed if, on account of the insecurity of the capital, public opinion demands the retention of our fleet at home as our only security against invasion ... under existing conditions, there is a great and powerful temptation to invasion, presented by the entire absence of works between London and the coast.²

While the actual place of landing and the path of the possible French line of march could not be predicted perfectly, the topography of the British countryside and the location of roads provided useful clues. The enemy

1. Cab 37/22/37 "A French Invasion." 15 November 1888. p.2.

2. Cab 37/20/49 "The Defence of London." 9, 12 November 1887. p.2.

would most likely land somewhere between Harwich and Littlehampton.

Assuming a landing South of the Thames,

the great battle for the safety of the capital will be delivered at some point along the line of the chalk escarpment, which runs from Medway to Guildford, while in the case of a landing on the east coast, it is likely - though not to the same degree of probability - that this action will take place along a line running, roughly, from near Hertford, by Brentwood to Thames Haven.¹

The War Office plan against French invasion utilized elements both of the public agitation for the defence of London and the previous official planning. It involved the raising of three Army Corps in England, who would be quickly transported by rail from strategically-located centres near railway lines to engage the French expeditionary force. While these numerically-inferior Regular troops fought a delaying action, time would be provided for the preparations of entrenchments on the North Downs for the Volunteers. Eventually the two defending forces would meet and, assisted by superior artillery firepower and a superior defensive position, bring the French advance to a halt. The foundation of the scheme was a system of 34 strong fieldworks of concrete construction, which would command all approaches by road and rail to London. The War Office argued

What the erection of these works would mean therefore, is that our territorial troops, instead of having to defend a front of 400 miles against an enemy superior to them in manœuvring power, would have to guard a fortified and armed line of 90 miles against an enemy inferior to them in artillery power.²

From their prepared trenches on the chalk bluffs the British troops and auxiliaries could pour down fire upon the French invaders on the level plains below. All that was required for armament was 150 guns for the

1. Cab 37/20/49 "The Defence of London". 9, 12 November 1887. p. 5.

2. Ibid. Part 2, p.2.

As well
fieldworks which would over-awe the French artillery, /as 130 machine-guns which would prevent French infantry attacks. The Duke of Cambridge, in forwarding the plan to the Cabinet and to the Queen, strongly urged that the plan be adopted as soon as possible, in view of the armed state of the Continent and the fact that the rapid growth of London would soon make the purchase of suitable defensive sites very difficult and expensive.¹

The Cabinet, influenced by Salisbury's alarm, were not slow in acting. The Prime Minister wrote to the Queen on December 3rd that the Secretary of State for War, Mr. Edward Stanhope, had been instructed to purchase without delay the ground for the projected London defences. Wolseley's campaign, however, had its cost. The Cabinet also discussed at length claims by "leading officers of the War Office" that they had a right "to discuss freely in general society" the military policy of their superiors. Salisbury produced an angry memorandum on "Objections to the publication of confidential opinions of military officers", and the Cabinet resolved to put an end to such insubordinate practices.²

The Government's announcement of the Army & Navy Estimates in March, 1889, provided the true dénouement to the invasion agitation, and the quarrel between the two services. The Navy had won. Stanhope, even as he announced limited proposals for defending the capital, emphasized that

our uniform policy and practice is to give the preference in every respect to the requirements of the Navy, and to postpone, if not to abandon services; if they interfere in any way with the execution of demands for the sea service.³

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1. Cab 37/20/49 "The Defence of London." 9, 12 November 1887. Part 2, p.2.
 2. Cab 41/21/18. Salisbury to Queen. 3 December 1888.
Cab 41/21/19. Salisbury to Queen. 7 December 1888.
Cab 37/23/2 "Objections to the publication of confidential opinions of military officers." 7 January 1889.
 3. Hansard. (Commons) 11 March 1889. col. 1406.

The Cabinet had rejected any plan "for building permanent fortifications for the defence of London. Such a scheme is extravagant, visionary, and wholly unnecessary." The only trustworthy indication of the expense involved had been an estimate that three forts alone would cost £350,000. Instead, Stanhope proposed a compromise scheme of storehouses circling London, which would serve as storehouses and mobilization centres for home defence troops, in the remote event invaders somehow evaded the Navy. This was a second-line defence, strictly subordinate to the Fleet.

Everyone hopes and thinks that our first line of defence should be strong enough to defend the country from the possibility of invasion, and the scheme now adopted is an additional security, necessary only in what may be a remote contingency.¹

Certain strategic positions around London which commanded roads and railways had been examined by the nation's most experienced officers, and sites marked out, where

upon the occurrence of grave emergency, certain steps, arranged in every way beforehand, could at once be taken ... It is the intention to establish ordinary field-works in the form of intrenched camps, which would form the backbone of the defensive line, and in which certain articles which would be required at the shortest notice could be stored, and where it will be possible hereafter to exercise some of the defenders in the actual place which they might have to defend.²

Home defence advocates were further appeased by the announcement that detail improvements were being carried out in the Auxiliary Forces, and that a scheme of mobilization was being drawn up against the contingency of invasion. Stanhope stressed the degree of progress this represented, for no plan of national defence had existed when the Government had come into office two years before.

1. Hansard. (Commons) 11 March 1889. col. 1412.

2. Ibid. col. 1413.

But because they represented a compromise, no one party was completely reconciled to the Government proposals, the "invasionists" least of all. Their expensive and elaborate scheme for fortification of London had been rejected, and even the Government's substitute scheme ignored their warnings that an overseas attack would come as a sudden surprise which would find foreign troops in possession of London by the fourth or fifth day. The official preparations envisaged a much more leisurely state of affairs, based on the premise that England would have advance warning of a French attack. Stanhope's mobilization scheme allowed ten days "to assemble the men and horses and distribute clothes and arms.." ¹

Other groups in Parliament were opposed even to the modest scheme announced. One Liberal Member charged that such preparations would embroil Britain in the evils of Continental militarism.

From the way in which the right hon. Gentleman spoke we might imagine ourselves on the eve of a Great European War. He talked of arrangements to meet great emergencies, of the possibilities of invasion, and the necessity of defending London by field works. But I see nothing in the state of the world affecting us to justify such a tone; and I am afraid speech and action such as this tends to make peace less secure. ²

Sir Wilfred Lawson likewise branded the construction of invasion defences as "provocative", and accused Wolseley of going up and down the country preaching conscription. He asserted that "it is a cruel thing to pay away the money of the people as a protection against phantom foes, while you have all the forces of poverty, misery, vice, and crime in your midst." ³ Opposition also arose from the ranks of the navalists in Parliament. Lord Charles Beresford invoked the arguments of the Blue Water School against

1. Hansard. (Commons) 11 March 1889, cols. 1410-1411.

2. Ibid. col. 1446.

3. Ibid. 12 March 1889. col. 1534.

the scheme.

As to invasion, I do not believe in the fears entertained with regard to such a contingency. If once our Fleet is beaten, why should the enemy attempt to effect a landing on these shores, with the chance of losing so many men and ships and the risk of being attacked from the rear, when he would be able to starve us into terms by stopping our food supply? I do not wish to join in what is described as a scare in regard to the invasion of this country, and I feel quite sure the idea is not one that will create any great amount of fear among the people.¹

The invasion scare of 1888, promoted by Hamley and his allies on behalf of the fortification of London, and by Wolseley for a more efficient home defence and a larger army, was consummated with superlative irony by the Naval Defence Act of 1889, which "provided for 8 first-class battleships, 9 large and 29 smaller cruisers, 4 fast gunboats, and 18 torpedo-gunboats at a cost of £21,500,000".² The Admiralty was therefore the main beneficiary of the invasion scare. While the home defence enthusiasts drew attention to the possibility of invasion, the Blue Water publicists emphasized that the Navy alone was the first line of defence against it. They had appropriated the invasion scare for the sole use of the Admiralty, for the Colombes and their followers had not said that invasion was impossible, only that the Fleet was the sole defence against it. The promotion of an invasion scare by Wolseley and his allies was therefore self-defeating. In contrast with the immense new £21.5 million loan raised for the navy, the Army estimates were raised only fractionally: from £16.7 million to £17.3 million, and only £160,000 was spent on the "Defence of London" scheme in the next fifteen years.³

1. Hansard (Commons) 11 March 1889, col. 1530

2. A.J. Marder. Op. Cit. p. 143.

3. Hansard (Commons) 11 March 1889. Col. 1412; 29 October 1906, col.671; 1 November 1906, cols. 1308-1310.

The scare had opened a rift between the two services which was to continue for a generation, and henceforth, the Admiralty and War Office were to pursue contradictory, and sometimes competitive, policies in the all-important area of national defence. The War Office, disappointed in its campaign for a larger and more efficient home army, and a fortified London, began to elaborate and improve upon Stanhope's programme for the "Defence of London." The Admiralty, encouraged by the doctrines of the Blue Water school, entered a long period of naval expansion and began increasingly to arrogate to itself the sole responsibility for the defence of the Kingdom. Wolseley's sensational public quarrels, first with the Prime Minister, then with the First Lord of the Admiralty, called attention to the urgent need for stronger Cabinet control over the two warring departments, and the notorious need for interservice defence planning and cooperation. The main theme of the following decade was a series of sporadic attempts to impose a unified and coherent home defence policy upon ^{the} contradictory policies of the two services, and their protagonists among the general public.

CHAPTER II: THE NATIONAL DEFENCE DEBATE, 1889-1899

Throughout the remaining years of the nineteenth century, the protagonists of various schools of home defence aired their differences in Parliament and in print against a background of growing public interest in the problem of British national security. The war of words between the War Office and Admiralty continued in public and in private, and agreement on the important issue of defence from overseas attack seemed as elusive as ever. The controversy came out into the open again at the R.U.S.I. in January 1889, when Captain F.G. Stone of the Royal Artillery was so unwise as to deliver a few comments on the topic of invasion in the presence of Admiral Colomb.¹ Wolseley, who was acting as Chairman, attempted to mollify the effect of Stone's remarks, by speaking of offensive naval operations against the enemy coast and fleet as the heart and soul of the national defence,² but Colomb was not appeased. He was prompted to prepare another of his forceful papers on the invasion question, this time not only on the peculiar situation of Great Britain, but on the problem of overseas attack in general. This general manifesto of strategic doctrine was entitled "The Relations Between Local Fortifications and a Moving Navy", and before presenting it to the R.U.S.I., Colomb showed a careful consideration for maximum publicity. He announced in advance through the correspondence columns of The Times that the paper would be extremely controversial, for he had determined to play the role of the "Devil's Advocate", and state his case in the strongest terms imaginable.³

1. Captain F.G. Stone, R.A. "Quick-Firing Guns for Fortress Defence." R.U.S.I. Journal. (1889) pp. 1-38.

2. Ibid. p. 38.

3. Times. 18 February 1889. p. 12.

Admiral Colomb's efforts were rewarded. When he rose to read his paper, the audience was remarkable for the number of high naval and military officers present. Colomb began his general critique on overseas invasion by contending that the military were trying to pursue three contradictory and competitive policies.

There is the line which steadily regards the invasion of these islands, not as a possible conclusion to a series of disasters such as history furnishes us with no examples of, but as an incident of war at least as prominently near as a great sea-fight. This line, when pursued, demands the raising, maintaining and training of a vast body of troops on principles such as we find on continental countries, and it will ask for the fortification of London ...

A second military school, Colomb contended, was headed by Captain Stone, who would disperse the Army all over the world in scattered garrisons or forts. A third, led by General F.B. Maurice, Colomb's own teacher in things military, advocated a counterstroke strategy, in which an amphibious army would join with the Fleet to inflict sudden prepared attacks on enemy shores. Colomb stated his belief that these three separate policies required three separate armies, and announced his personal preference for General Maurice's counterstroke strategy.¹

Continuing, the Admiral enlarged upon his earlier historical argument against invasion. Citing the four French attempts at invasion in 1744, 1759, 1779, and 1805, Colomb subjected each operation to analysis and used them as evidence for his case. In two of these instances the French had appeared in the Channel but had not made good their pretensions; on another, they had been destroyed by the Royal Navy in mid-Channel. In

1. Rear-Admiral P.H. Colomb. "The Relation Between Local Fortifications and a Moving Navy." R.U.S.I. Journal (1889) lecture of 1 March 1889. p. 150.

the latest instance, 1805, the French Admiral's nerve had failed him in consequence of the great risks¹ attending the crossing of a contested sea. A "moving Navy", he said, "must either be in command of the sea, or fighting for it."²

The discussion which followed this second paper was long and featured many authorities of reputation. Virtually every military and naval writer of significance was in attendance. In spite of the frequent reminders of the ten minute limit on speeches, much of the discussion had to be postponed to a separate meeting a week later. Colonel Fraser, R.E. expressed concern over the Admiral's mental health and "the more startling eccentricities to which he has given way." History, he asserted, could be made to prove or disprove practically anything. If the appeal was to history, to history he would go. Colonel Fraser plunged into the labyrinths of the Napoleonic period and pointed out that in 1800, the fleet notwithstanding, a home army of a million soldiers had been raised, and this from a population half the size of that of 1889. Furthermore, Napoleon, the greatest General of the epoch, had thought invasion possible. So had Wellington, who had defeated him. Since that time French preparations had improved their Channel ports beyond comparison. Colonel Fraser counselled that if the home defence forces were disbanded, this would only increase the temptation to the French to invade. He also attacked the contention of Colomb and his allies that "investment was more likely than invasion," and stated his belief that the capture of London would be a much surer way of ending an indeterminable war. A dramatic

1. R.U.S.I. Journal. (1889) p. 157.

2. Ibid. p. 166.

success such as this would be a sure foundation for the dynasty of a dictator.¹ This last argument was especially telling among those who feared a Boulanger reign in Paris, no small consideration at this time.

General Lothian Nicholson, the Inspector-General of Fortifications, also had doubts about Colomb's doctrines, and charged that the consequences would be that

military and civilians alike, are to stand on the shores of our land and watch the Navy fighting the enemy, to twiddle our thumbs in anxiety that the Navy may be victorious, because, unless it is, there is nothing behind.²

Captain Penrose Fitzgerald of the Royal Navy, picked up Nicholson on this point, and stated the naval case against the home defence force in even stronger terms than the Colombs had used. He stated baldly that the Army was simply "not in the hunt in the matter."

They have nothing to do with the defence of the United Kingdom, because once it comes to fighting on these shores, if once a volunteer fires a shot in anger, all I can say is, it will be 'all up', he might as well fire blank, every bit ...³

Sir John Colomb expanded upon this. The Navy could hardly help the fact that the Volunteers and Militia would be twiddling their thumbs. It was quite true that the Army would not be in the hunt of home defence, for the Royal Navy owned all the horses. Until command of the sea had been gained by the Fleet, the myriads of soldiers in England were like "rats in a trap."⁴ Sir John summed up the Blue Water case.

1. R.U.S.I. Journal. (1889)pp. 187-188.

2. Ibid. p. 169.

3. Ibid. p. 174.

4. Ibid. pp. 181-82.

I think our true safety lies in this: that our docks, stores, coals and offings must be locally secured against raiding attacks, that our Fleet must command the sea by being strong enough to paralyze the power of hostile war fleets, and thus to secure the release of our Army for defence of our frontiers abroad and for descent on the enemy's coast.¹

In reply, General Gerald Graham expressed his surprise that "with so bad a case so good a paper has been produced". He stated that if naval history taught anything it was that the Navy had constantly lost and regained local command of the sea. Arguments of this sort were dangerous in another way, for they would lead to misplaced confidence, which would end in disaster for the next generation. Over-confidence had been responsible for the Prussian disaster at Jena as well as Napoleon III's defeat at Sedan.²

The soldiers soon launched another counter-attack. On May 1, 1889, Major G.R. Walker read a paper entitled "Fortifications and Fleets", with Wolseley acting as Chairman. The Times leader the next day remarked that this was

obviously meant to be an official reply carrying all the weight that can be given to it by the patronage of the ADJUTANT-GENERAL and an important department of the War Office.³

According to the Times, all Walker's paper showed was ^{that} the military authorities had never grasped the condition of national safety.

In another fifteen years the War Office may perhaps have overtaken the public opinion of to-day, just as to-day it has overtaken the public opinion of fifteen years ago.⁴

1. R.U.S.I. Journal (1889) p. 183.

2. Ibid. pp. 180-181.

3. Times. 2 May 1889, p.9.

4. Ibid.

Walker's paper had indeed contributed nothing to the debate, except for his opening contention, quickly disproved by Admiral Colomb, that

ENGLAND is the only civilized country where, at the present time, it is possible to stand up and to deny, with any chance of acceptance, the utility of permanent fortifications.¹

In the discussion following the paper, the Colomb brothers launched a vigorous counter-attack. The Admiral commented that the most valuable lesson of the paper was to show that the basic points of national strategy were still not understood by those whose duty it was to defend the country. Sir John Colomb put it more bluntly.

.. military and naval authorities have been led astray from a calm consideration of material facts by politicians and by popular influence based upon erroneous information.²

The Admiral went further than mere words, and distributed and read a second paper, entitled "Categorical Replies to Major Walker's Paper.." which enumerated the Major's errors of fact and interpretation, and corrected them in detail. Colomb corrected the impression that he had said invasion was impossible. Great risks in fact did exist, and an uncritical and instinctive faith in fortifications would tend to blind people to these risks.³ He attacked the £3 million Government loan of the year before, for raising funds for additional fortifications. But this was only the beginning; forts were only superficially cheap. In reality they were very expensive, as they diverted expenditure from more useful areas of national defence, such as the Fleet. Misdirection of funds and confusion over priorities had resulted in

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1. Major G.R. Walker. "Fortifications and Fleets" R.U.S.I. Journal. (1889) p. 659.
 2. Ibid. p. 710
 3. Ibid. p. 685.

the anomaly of the greatest Navy in the world costing 14,000,000¹ a year, while a numerically smaller army costs 20,000,000¹.

Because the reading of Admiral Colomb's critique absorbed the whole of the discussion time, the discussion was adjourned until a later date.

On this occasion Wolsley wisely absented himself, but other notables were given free play in debate. Here again high-ranking soldiers revealed the difficulty they had in understanding Blue Water arguments, removed as these were from their frame of reference. General Nicholson, the Inspector General of Fortifications, confessed his "confusion and puzzlement" over Colomb's teachings. He reiterated his contention, over Colomb's audible protests, that the logical conclusion of his doctrine would be to disarm the forts and disband the armed forces.² John Knox Laughton, Professor of Modern History at King's College, London, and an eminent naval historian,³ followed with a long dissertation on the history of forts in the defence of England. He pointed out that the elaborate defences erected at Plymouth and Portsmouth had not fired a shot in anger in the past 200 years, owing to the predominance of the Fleet. Laughton also criticized the prevailing tendency to talk of the Navy and Army as the first and second lines of defence. The fleet, he emphasised was the island's only defence. Once it was gone, Britain was helpless against blockade and starvation.⁴ Sir John Colomb, in his speech used almost the same words.⁵

1. R.U.S.I. Journal (1889) p. 695.

2. Ibid. p. 702.

3. For a discussion of Laughton's career and connection with the Colombes, see D.M. Schurmann. Education of a Navy. Cassell, London, 1965. pp.83-109.

4. R.U.S.I. Journal. (1889) pp. 705-706.

5. Ibid. p. 709.

The Times next day put the case against forts in even more balder terms, and stated that the country could not too speedily jettison the confusion of ideas inherent in describing the forts as the second line of defence. Its leader stated that "passive defence is no defence at all in this island", and referred to "that unfortunate and mischievous Commission of 1859" which had saddled the nation with useless passive defences. It said

we might put a continuous parapet of impenetrable iron round our coasts, and mount heavy guns at intervals of twenty yards, yet we should not have eroded to any degree the necessity for maintaining a Navy capable in all circumstances of keeping command of the sea.¹

The depth of the controversy, and its importance to the defence authorities of the time, is shown by the heat of the discussion, carried out at the R.U.S.I., in the newspaper columns, and later in journals of opinion and the halls of Parliament. Major Walker in his summary complained that all the papers had taken the subject up warmly, and had given expression to "every possible absurdity."²

By the end of this R.U.S.I. debate, it was fairly obvious that the doctrines of the Colombes were coming to prevail. Wolseley had been unavoidably detained, perhaps wisely, at the War Office, during the adjourned discussion, and Major Walker's summary and defence was a pot-pourri of the old arguments. Walker admitted to the errors in his paper pointed out by Admiral Colomb, and also expressed his agreement with several of Colomb's doctrines. He did not believe that comparisons between ships and forts should ever be made, although it appeared to many that this had been the subject of his paper the week before. What was required, however, was

1. Times. 2 May 1889. p. 9.

2. R.U.S.I. Journal. (1889) p. 718.

preparation as a deterrent against invasion. It followed that the home defence forces should never be disbanded. Were the regular army to be absent from England in the future, this might prove too great a temptation for some would-be Napoleon. Walker quoted William Harcourt as "a statesman of first class ministerial rank" as saying that this craze for spending money on the Fleet had been concocted by naval experts; the Channel, not the Fleet, was England's protection against invasion. But Walker's closing comments again underlined the inability of high-ranking soldiers to think from the naval viewpoint.¹

In ensuing papers at the R.U.S.I., army officers, in discussing questions of home defence, adopted the tactic of ignoring, rather than answering, the Blue Water critique. But they ignored it at their peril. When, for instance, a Lieutenant-Colonel delivered a paper on "Tactics of Coast Defence" in this vein later, Admiral Colomb was quick to point out that the assumptions governing the paper were that the Empire was moribund and bereft of the Fleet.² Brackenbury, who was acting as Chairman, indicated that the new navalism had been making some headway even in War Office circles and the Royal Engineers. In discussing attacks against the land from the sea, Brackenbury was careful to single out the contingency of a single cruiser landing 400 men. He hoped this lecture would bring about greater cooperation between the services and called for a body to decide a policy for both Army and Navy.³

1. R.U.S.I. Journal. (1889) p. 713-719.

2. Lt. Col. Walford. "Tactics of Coast Defence." Ibid. p. 940.

3. Ibid. pp. 946-47.

From the beginning the Blue Water critique of the invasion myth was combative and competitive in tone regarding the Army. The Colombs and their followers argued that the Government had only limited funds available for the purpose of national defence, and did not hide the fact that they regarded the War Office as their competitors for these funds. Behind the navalist agitation there was fear that the Navy was losing the battle for public opinion. Admiral Colomb complained

The military force in this country is by force of circumstances very much larger in volume, very much closer to the ears of the country than it is possible for the naval voice to be.¹

Similar sentiments were expressed on another occasion by Lord Charles Beresford, a leading naval propagandist, who professed jealousy of the Army's predominance.

They are represented at Court, and in the clubs, and society, whereas we naval men are hardly represented at all in the places which hold power and interest, and we look to the military men to help us ...²

But the great spread of Blue Water strategic doctrine, dependent upon inter-service cooperation and a common enthusiasm for the navalist cause in both services, did not come about overnight, for the somewhat direct and outspoken manner of the Colomb brothers was aimed at conversion rather than conciliation. In his defence of his 1889 paper on forts and fleets, Admiral Colomb revealed that the composition between the services for appropriations was one of his primary motivations.

... such a paper as this has been in my mind ever since the Estimates were moved for last year, when there was a vote on a loan of 3,000,000¹ for fortifications side by side with a reduction in the naval estimates of

1. R.U.S.I. Journal (1888) p. 166.

2. Ibid. pp. 24-25 (1889)

900,000¹. That, I may say, was the moving spirit behind me.¹

If the rapid spread of Colomb's doctrines among circles already disposed towards navalism was predictable, so was its much slower progress among the professional military and those with an emotional investment in the mystique of the "hedge-row defence". Wolseley's only public statements on the issue were singularly erratic. Two weeks after the Admiral's first paper, on June 6, 1888, Wolseley was acting as Chairman of an R.U.S.I. discussion on the training of soldiers. Wolseley, in his concluding summary as Chairman, departed from the subject under discussion to deliver a short peroration on the invasion question. He attacked recent imputations that the Channel provided immunity from invasion and read the orthodox War Office litany on overseas attack: authoritative military leaders, such as Napoleon and Wellington, had pronounced invasion possible. Wolseley was assured this view was shared by "every General Officer of weight in this country at this time".² A few months later, when again acting in the Chair at an R.U.S.I. discussion (January 1889) it appeared that Wolseley was now schooled in another liturgy entirely, and that the Colombs could be congratulated upon the conversion of an eminent proselyte. Wolseley praised in glowing terms

those offensive operations against the coast of your enemy, which should always be the heart and soul of your great scheme for national defence, both at home and abroad. If we desire to ensure the effective defence for this country, we must be able to take, by means of our Fleet, offensive action against our enemy's fleets and coasts.³

1. R.U.S.I. Journal. (1889) p. 201.

2. Ibid. (1888) p. 727.

3. Ibid. (1889) p. 38.

Despite Admiral Colomb's tendency to see things in terms of a military conspiracy, it was probably true that it was the Army that was more truly isolated in British society, and more limited in its appeal and support. For the Blue Water School had the natural advantage of being all things to all men. For the Gladstonian Liberals, it would present the Navy as an economic alternative to a militarism which would fill England with fortresses, garrisons, and large standing armies - all of which had been under suspicion since the time of Cromwell. "Pacifists" were reminded that the Fleet had only a defensive role, could not embark upon any Continental military adventure, and was an effective alternative to conscription. For Conservatives, concerned with imperial and defence questions, the Fleet was presented as the only viable means of home and Imperial defence. Moreover, naval doctrine was founded on actual war experience gained in the struggles of Britain's heroic age, not born of a period of weakness and strategic confusion, as were the forts of 30 years before. Forward-looking soldiers were encouraged to look upon the Fleet as a partner in the "counter-stroke" strategy, by which means a modern, effective, and mobile army would be landed on enemy coasts. For the general public, nurtured on the romantic nationalism of the time, the Fleet was presented as the heart of the nation, directed by doctrines that were the basis of heroic victories over the usurper Napoleon. To a generation reared on faith in scientific progress and technical achievement, the Blue Water pedagogues pointed out that the inventions of the steam and the telegraph underwrote and reinforced the strategic principles that had defended the island race in the past. When all these elements were compounded with the naval bias inherent in a

maritime empire, it is difficult to see how the new navalism could have avoided becoming part of the public domain. ¶ Less than a year later, however, in March 1890, it seemed that the Adjutant-General had slipped back into his own ways, for Admiral Colomb was criticizing him for an article Wolseley had written in the North American Review. The Admiral stated that Wolseley had not grasped even the most elementary points¹ of the debate over strategy which had been carried on for the last two years.¹ But Wolseley was not the only offender at the War Office, in the eyes of Admiral Colomb. When, in that same month Mr. Stanhope read his famous statement, which governed War Office policy for the next decade, he included defence against invasion as one of the main duties of the Regular Army. Admiral Colomb announced through the correspondence columns of the Times that he was "suffering from a fit of depression brought on by perusal of Mr. Stanhope's statement..." He charged that the theory underlying every paragraph of the War Minister's speech was

That, even without war, we are liable to wake up any morning and find General Brackenbury's 100,000 men of the enemy camped on the Sussex Downs, or, more likely still, making strategic movements in the midland counties.²

Admiral Colomb invoked the usual naval explanation for the public confusion: "it all comes about from undue suppression of the naval voice in this country." This was owing to the great preponderance in public opinion of the "military voice."

Its nominal numerical strength in the country is, I think, about five to one of the naval voice. Its actual strength cannot be less than 50 to one, if we

1. Times. 18 March 1890. p.4.

2. Ibid.

regard what is published ... care is always taken to keep the naval voice in so strict a minority that it remains weak, uncertain, and retiring, where it should be robust and powerful.¹

In another letter to the Times a week later, Colomb likened the War Office meddling in the invasion controversy to a hypothetical attempt by the Admiralty to dictate the tactics and strategy of the defence of the North West frontier.²

The growing ascendancy of the Blue Water School in the country at large accompanied growing estrangement between the War Office and the Admiralty over the issue of invasion. The R.U.S.I. debates had their counterpart in official interservice relations. The War Office continued to stress the dangers of invasion, presumably in the hope that this would lead to larger appropriations. The Admiralty, following the installation of Admiral Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton as First Sea Lord in early 1889, was thoroughly committed to the new Blue Water navalism. Matters were brought to a boil when the War Office, in mid-1889, addressed an official communication to the Admiralty asking them to estimate the possible numbers an enemy could land on the coast without naval interference. The War Office estimate had been 150,000. The Admiralty reply was hardly in the interests of interservice accord, asserting

Such a contingency as the landing of an enemy on these shores, without interference on the part of our Navy, is one which in their opinion could not arise without the annihilation of the Channel Fleet, our coast vessels, torpedo boats, and armed merchant cruisers, a contingency so remote that it would hardly appear to come within the range of speculation. Under the circumstances, therefore, My Lords do not consider it possible to make any calculations relating to the practicability of a

1. Times. 18 March 1890. p.4.

2. Ibid. 27 March 1890. p.13. The North West Frontier of India was several hundred mountainous miles from any ocean, and was, with the defence of Britain, the main responsibility of the War Office.

scheme or undertaking, when all the natural obstacles to its success are summarily removed.¹

The receipt of this letter produced anger and consternation in the War Office. The first draft of the War Office's reply was acrimonious in tone, observing that the letter "of their Lordships had not been such as to advance matters." Although this letter was not sent, its wording gives insight into Army thinking at this time. It continued:

so long as the Country maintains large bodies of troops which can only be used against an enemy who has penetrated within the Kingdom, the military authorities feel it to be their duty to work out beforehand, as far as can be done, plans for the action of our land forces against such an enemy ... Mr. Stanhope feels that such a reply to one of great Departments of the State, when asking for information on a point of national importance, can only have been given through some misconception.²

The impression conveyed by the draft letter is that the War Office was indeed honestly trying to work out an efficient scheme for using the home defence force of Regular and Auxiliary troops. But the War Office had not yet examined their first principles: they were not asking, as the Navy Officers were, whether invasion was possible. They rather assumed it was, and were attempting to find the most effective way of dealing with it. The War Office imagination ended at the water's edge. The inter-service quarrel pointed up the fact that the War Office and Admiralty were at this time still working on two different levels. Colomb and his followers had appropriated history to provide the Navy with an all-encompassing world naval strategy. In contrast, the Army had no ruling principles at all. The two services were in two separate generations of strategic development: the Army was still ruled by intuition, the Navy by analysis, and both by

1. A.J. Marder. British Naval Policy. 1880-1905. Putnam, London, 1940. p.72.

2. WO 32/267 "Draft Letter to Under-Secretary, War Office." 23 August 1889.

self-interest. This goes far to explain the obsession of the War Office and the home defence enthusiasts with tactics, the petty details and the minutiae of the invasion problem to the complete exclusion of consideration of first principles. Conversely, the naval authorities and writers, unwittingly encouraged this obscurantism on the part of the War Office, for they concentrated almost exclusively upon the strategic part of the operation. This left little to the War Office except the question of a raid, for the Blue Water School taught that a small force of limited size could indeed land on the coast for a limited time. The most important question was to estimate the size of the largest enemy force which could effectively slip past the Fleet. The War Office was at least tentatively trying to grope towards a solution of this question. If they were in error by mentioning 150,000 troops as the size of this raiding force, the Admiralty was equally at fault for taking umbrage so quickly and not providing some accommodation. As it was, it was left to the War Office to suggest a series of inter-service conferences to deal with this question, and to ask for further calculations from the Admiralty to help them establish a scale of attack.¹

The Admiralty again proved very uncooperative, for their reply nine months later was that

the information required would be a work of very Considerable time for the Transport and Naval Intelligence Departments and would so interfere with other pressing duties that if it is to be undertaken Officers would have to be appointed specially for the purpose.

Granted the small size of the overworked Naval Intelligence Department at

1. WO 32/267 "Draft Letter to Under-Secretary, War Office." 23 August 1889.

this time, this reply was doubly insulting, both in its tardiness and in its insinuation that this question was of almost negligible importance. It reiterated that the Admiralty could scarcely conceive of the Navy being absent from an enemy landing operation in "sufficient magnitude to at least very seriously hamper and harass such an invading force." The Admiralty found the assumptions underlying the War Office approach to the problem unrealistic: the entire maritime resources of France were at the disposal of the enemy; yet none of the maritime forces of this country were at the disposal of the British Government. This situation, the Admiralty emphasized, appeared "to be an abstract statement of a most improbable contingency."¹ Nevertheless, the Admiralty condescended to assign two officers to act as representatives to the proposed Naval and Military Committee, but stipulated rigidly that they would only offer statements of fact and that beyond this any opinions they would offer would be only as private individuals and not as representatives of the Admiralty. The Conference, designed to coordinate the policy of the two departments and to end their quarrel over invasion, did not enjoy an auspicious beginning.

Concurrently with this less than cordial correspondence between the two departments, the Hartington Commission published its report on the "Measures required to ensure closer administrative harmony between the naval and military services." The commission, which had been called into being by the publicly-proclaimed variance in policy of the Army and Navy revealed during the invasion scare of 1888, included a number of famous and professional officers of both services: the Marquis of Hartington, Lord Randolph Churchill, W.H. Smith, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and General Henry

1. Ibid. R.D. Awdry to Under-Secretary, War Office. 24 May 1890.

Brackenbury, who was at this time the Director of Military Intelligence. Their report disclosed the extent of the lack of agreement, or even of communication, between the services:

little or no attempt has ever been made to establish settled and regular intercommunications or relations between them or to secure that the establishments of one service should be determined with any reference to the requirements of the other.

Furthermore, no combined plan of operations for the defence of British possessions anywhere, for any given contingency, had ever been worked out or decided upon by the two departments in co-operation.¹

The public outcry was enormous, for those who had been dismayed by the divergent statements of policy between the two services in 1888 were now even more appalled to discover the complete lack of cooperation between the two services and, moreover, that the two years which had elapsed since 1888 had seen absolutely no improvement in interservice relations.

One concrete result of the Hartington Commission report was to translate the tentative suggestions of the War Office for a joint conference on invasion into the actual formation of a Joint Naval and Military Committee which was to decide the general principles of national defence, as the Hartington Commission report had recommended.² But this had somewhat of an opposite effect. The official committees set up to coordinate the policies of the Admiralty and the War Office tended, at least so far as the discussion of the invasion possibility was concerned, to petrify

1. Cd. 5979. Preliminary and Further Reports (with appendices) of the Royal Commissioners appointed to Enquire into the Civil and Professional Administration of the Naval and Military Departments and the Relation of Those Departments to each Other and to the Treasury. H.M.S.O., 1890.

2. Ibid. p. viii.

the positions of the two services. Yet the imposition of interservice conferences upon the services from above was not without its positive side, for they both were forced to develop and define their respective positions in the report which was forwarded to the Cabinet. If the line of debate between the two services were hardened, their respective positions were clarified, and this was a beginning towards narrowing the gap between the two services.

The most eminent of the committees which resulted was the Landing Places Committee, which met 11 times between 1891 and 1894. Its membership was hardly in the interest of interservice harmony, for the Admiralty chose as its senior representative Admiral Colomb himself, now on the retired list. Assisting Colomb was Captain (later Admiral of the Fleet) Prince Louis Battenberg, one of the most able younger acolytes of the Blue Water persuasion. The War Office's choice of representatives was equally uncompromising. The senior military representative was Colonel Coleridge Groves, who as Assistant Adjutant-General was directly under Wolseley and personally responsible for the Defence of London scheme. Grove's attitude to invasion is best revealed in a letter from Stanhope's private secretary to Colonel John Ardagh, who was himself hardly lukewarm about home defence.

Groves is even madder than you are on the subject of invasion, and is recasting the various schemes from the point of view of our finding the French army on our breakfast tables with the Times tomorrow morning.¹

The most outspoken and zealous proponents of the position of both services had been chosen for this committee designed to bring about

1. Ardagh MSS. PRO 30/40/13. Fleetwood Wilson to Ardagh. 15 August 1889.

cooperation between the two services.

The meetings began in an atmosphere of suspicion and discord. Colomb, designated as Chairman, and Battenberg, attacked the terms of the committee, which were to establish the scale of probable enemy overseas attack on Britain, as academic and of no practical value. They believed it was senseless to attempt to establish an expected scale of attack which would form the basis of the calculations of the home defence planning. They argued that a rigidly established figure would make a mockery of the extremely variable conditions bearing on the success of an overseas attack. Under perfect conditions, they said, 300,000 to 400,000 French troops could be landed on the beaches of Brighton, but such perfect conditions were so remote as to be out of the realm of probability. Colomb and Battenberg also criticized the War Office stipulation that the fleet be assumed as absent: this raised their ire more than any other point. They protested that if the Fleet were assumed to be absent, this made any calculations regarding the element of time meaningless. If there was no Fleet to interrupt the landing, the enemy had all the time in the world at his disposal and he might even seize a harbour to facilitate the landing of his troops and heavy equipment.¹

However, by the third meeting of the Committee, matters had improved to the point that both services had agreed to a point of reference and the setting of the problem: each service would examine the chances of a French invasion under three separate hypothetical contingencies, in which

1. WO 33/54. A318. "Landing Places Committee: Correspondence and Minutes of Committee Meeting." 1894. p. 16.

the French were assumed to have 10 days, 21 days, and then 6 weeks available to plan and launch an invasion. The military representatives, who reported first, agreed that at least ten days were required for the project to be successfully carried out. And beyond this, the soldiers argued, the prospect for the British progressively deteriorated.

Every 24 hours which is added to this 10 days alters the conditions in the invaders' favour with startling rapidity. Two more days at disposal would make the operation fairly feasible, four more would bring it within the range of reasonable adventure ... Fourteen days may be said to mark the danger point for this country, as regards a French invasion. With that time at the disposal of the enemy the chances for and against success are about ^{even} with 21 days at command it is not only practicable but easy.¹

The conclusions of Colomb and Battenberg were in marked contrast. They argued that

even supposing the British Navy did not exist, 10 days is too short a time within which to begin and complete the invasion of this country with 100,000 men since the Crimean War the naval defences of these islands have been such as to forbid the contemplation of invasion by the French until they had been separately destroyed ... the strength of the naval defence would grow by the prolongation of the notice much faster than the strength of the military attack.

The root of the controversy was at least evident: the Army could not calculate with reference to the Fleet, the Navy could not calculate without it. Where the military representatives completely overlooked the Navy, the naval representatives could not look beyond it, emphasizing that the hypothetical French invaders must aim at its elimination. If this were done, they argued, the French could invade at leisure. All, however, were able to sign a conclusion which indicated the extent of agreement. All admitted that the Fleet was the primary protection of the British Isles against invasion, and that the army was secondary in

1. WO/33/54. p. iv.

consideration. All also agreed that national defence was not to be found "in such physical obstacles as are presented either by sea or shore" but rather in prepared defences.¹

The naval members were determined to get in the last word, however, and wrote a paper based on the questionable assumption that the French naval authorities would work according to Blue Water axioms. Colomb and Battenberg argued that the French naval authorities were aware that no single stratagem, but a series of them, were required to decoy all British warships away from the Channel. Even if the Channel Fleet were somehow drawn away, they maintained, a formidable force still remained which included 7 coast defence ships, 40 gunboats and 95 torpedo-boats. This force, although it could not tackle the French escorting warships on equal terms, could still cause a great deal of discomfort among the assembled and immobile hosts of French transports, heavily loaded with troops. The capricious Channel weather was an additional deterrent, for should the wind shift,

the landing of infantry on the beach might become slow, difficult, and dangerous in a moderate surf. A very light surf would stop the landing of Cavalry, Artillery, and carriages.²

There was a strong tide on the South coast, the most likely target of a French invasion. Only 12 small ports were available for the fitting-out of the expedition on the French Channel coast and even in these only about half of the available shipping was of French nationality.

The military members responded with the arguments employed in the

1. WO/33/54. A318. p. viii.

2. Ibid. p. ix.

debates at the R.U.S.I. earlier. They quoted the report of the 1860 Commission, and made reference to the authoritative opinions of Napoleon and Wellington regarding the invasion of England. They stated their criticism of the Blue Water position thus:

The assumption made by the War Office throughout, is that circumstances may occur which will prevent any effective interference by our Navy with the invading flotilla, and that the security of the country may depend on the power of the land forces to defeat a hostile army during or after its landing ... the whole weight of opinion in this country, whether of the general public or of the successive Governments which have administered affairs, is against this view.

It is notable that where the Blue Water School appropriated the history of the Napoleonic naval wars and more remote periods, the appeal to history of the home defence enthusiasts was heavily weighted in favour of the period since the invasion scare of 1859 when the fortification school had been in its ascendancy. On this occasion, for example, Groves and Salmond referred to the Volunteers' long history of 34 years as evidence of popular feeling vis à vis invasion, and quoted extensively from the report of the 1859 Commission that the Navy was not sufficient for national defence. In addition, they pointed out that the War Office had spent and was spending much time and energy in perfecting a home defence mobilization scheme against a large hostile army. They concluded with another tactic used by the soldiers in the R.U.S.I. debates: they took the Blue Water School to its extreme conclusion without reference to the Colombs' careful qualifications and asserted:

If the Admiralty view be correct, we have for years past been spending money in entirely wrong directions. If it is right, the disbanding of a large part of our auxiliary forces and the abandonment of all preparation for a Home Defence mobilization seem to be necessary consequences.¹

1. WO/33/54. A318. p. xxii.

This was a reductio ad absurdum which had already been repudiated by the navalists.

The committee therefore ended in an impasse, for it had failed to coordinate the home defence policy of the two services. On the other hand, the Landing Places Committee did represent a certain advance: under the direction of the Cabinet, official representatives from both services had met and delineated the areas of disagreement. The positions of the two departments were now at least on official record, and there was a point of departure for official inquiries in the future. When, in fact, the Government did re-examine the contingency of invasion a decade later, frequent references were made by the Prime Minister to the work of this Committee.

The War Office, undeterred by the strictures of the Blue Water School, plunged into the London Defence Scheme with great enthusiasm in the years immediately following the 1888 invasion scare. Colonel Hugh Sinclair has left in his autobiography a vivid picture of the Committee which drew up the defensive line around London in the months following April 1889. The Committee at first concentrated on designing the small permanent fortified storehouses which were to serve as mobilization centres, ammunition warehouses and anchor points for the entrenched line of Volunteers on the Surrey Downs. The staff officers involved would travel down to the area by train and walk or drive to the sites.

Having selected a position in general we proceeded to work it out in minute detail, examining every hedge, house, wall, garden, wood, slope, tree, and village, considering the enemy's line of advance, point of view

and artillery positions, and finally deciding the actual fighting line, the form of trench to be employed, the obstacles to be provided in front (barbed wire was then only subsidiary), the clearances to be made for a field of fire, the houses to be defended or demolished, our artillery positions and emplacements, the special forts for weak points, or to strengthen flanks, means of approach, and second lines.¹

Clearly, the War Office was taking invasion very seriously indeed. Sinclair adds that it was necessary to allot to each defending unit its appointed task of clearing the brush and preparing the defence trench, so a work scale was established to determine "how much trench digging, obstacle-making, tree-felling, and hedge-clearing a volunteer might be expected to accomplish" in a given time. Detailed maps of each prospective defence position were drawn and then transferred to larger maps for the guidance of each home defence unit, who were assigned specific places in the trenches. As each position was completed, the Headquarters Staff would journey down from the War Office in London to inspect it. This party would usually consist of Wolseley, The Adjutant-General, Buller, the Quarter-Master-General, Sir Richard Harrison, Inspector of Home Forces, as well as the Inspector-General of the Artillery. According to Sinclair, Wolseley was always the most critical, alert, and suggestive of the party: he was the first to leave the carriage to inspect the various defence positions and would take any trouble to solve various problems connected with the scheme.²

Colonel Coleridge Groves, who had succeeded Colonel John Ardagh as the officer responsible for the scheme, wrote to him in August 1889 that

1. Col. Hugh M. Sinclair. Camp and Society. Chapman and Hall, London, 1926. p. 172.

2. Ibid. p. 173.

in carrying on his work as Assistant Adjutant-General, he was putting all his energies into home defence. Most of the locations of mobilization centres and the storehouses for ammunition had already been chosen and the negotiations for the purchase of the necessary land surrounding the storehouse sites completed. All of the ground South and East of London had been examined.¹ The enthusiasm of the War Office for the Defence of London project was wide-spread and infectious. Lieutenant-General Sir Gerald Ellison, who participated in the project, later recalled that "when I joined the War Office in 1890, home defence and particularly the defence of London filled the picture to the exclusion of all other considerations".²

The "two solid years of unintermittent work" on the London defence positions were declared complete in March 1892, and the staff officers who had spent these long months working out the laborious calculations for the trench line congratulated themselves on the fact that the defences of London were as perfect as they could be on paper.³ Ardagh shared the general emotion of euphoria and accomplishment, and confided to his diary in August that

All my pets were flourishing: The Defence of London was well in hand, many of the sites having been purchased and the projects having been prepared for putting the line in a state of defence. The mobilization regulations were at

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1. Ardagh MSS. PRO/40/2. Col. Coleridge Groves to Ardagh. 14 August 1889.
 2. Lt. Gen. Sir Gerald Ellison "From Here and There: Reminiscences." The Lancashire Lad. October 1934. p. 6.
 3. Sinclair. Op. Cit. p. 173.

last ready for publication and my friend and successor Grove was working on the same lines. I feel that a menace and a danger which has occasioned me anxiety during the whole of my career has at last been removed and that we are safe. The defenceless condition of the richest city in the world might have proved too strong a temptation to resist. Now the measures which I have originated will, I believe, give it security.¹

Ardagh's contentment was not without foundation, for the War Office had indeed taken serious and comprehensive measures against a French invasion.

Not only had the London defences been completely mapped out on paper, but an elaborate mobilization scheme had been drawn up to supplement it, which outlined a schedule of "Executive Measures to be Taken in the event of Apprehended Invasion." During the first day of mobilization, the Regulars would be mobilized and the Auxiliaries called up. Contractors would be ordered to begin the forts and entrenchments according to pre-arranged plan, using common labour. The Cabinet would give an executive order providing for the withdrawal of all railway rolling stock from all areas within twenty miles of the coast. Mines would be laid which would destroy "any tunnel, bridge, viaduct, or other edifice, whose destruction may be essential to the defence." Military posts would be connected by telegraph and minefields would be laid in strategic harbours. In addition, a pontoon bridge would be quickly built, from materials stockpiled on the spot, across the Thames at Gravesend. This would permit the home defence forces to cross rapidly from one bank of the Thames to the other to meet local landing threats. The foundation of this bridge was a series of large rafts towed by steam launches. If the news came that the enemy was

1. 'Susan, Countess of Malmesbury. The Life of Major-General Sir John Ardagh. Murray, London, 1909. pp. 252-53.

actually nearing the British coast, additional measures would be put into effect. Piers and quays on the South and East coasts would be mined for demolition, and efforts would be made to run blockships into unfortified creeks and inlets. Finally, the Royal Military Canal, which had originally been dug as a defence against a Napoleonic invasion at the beginning of the century, would be flooded from Rye to Hythe, and the line running parallel behind it would be put in a state of defence.¹ But Blue Water ideas were slowly penetrating even the War Office. In November 1895, the Director of Military Intelligence, Lieutenant-General E.H. Chapman, initiated a War Office study of possible defences against small raids on the coast, the only form of surprise attack deemed possible by the Blue Water authorities. Blue Water perspectives and terminology predominated in Chapman's memorandum: he believed that "the enemy would risk a raid of a purely predatory kind" against only "a high-priority target" such as the destruction of a harbour's defences or the severing of an exposed railway.

Chapman expressed special concern that naval signal stations might be open to attack "by a few boatloads of men² landed from vessels of shallow draft. He also feared that a seizure of a port by up to 2,000 men might be the immediate precursor of an attempt to land in force. In a second note a week later, Chapman's thinking was in even closer harmony with the new naval strategists. He warned that if France were the enemy, only two types of attack were to be feared: "(i) Raids by fleets of torpedo boats on our great dockyards (ii) Raids by small parties on unprotected

1. WO 33/49. A171. "Defence of England: Executive Measures to be Taken in Event of Apprehended Invasion." 1889; PRO 30/40/13. A.48. "Mobilization Tables for Home Defence." July 1890.

points." In the latter case, raiding parties would probably consist of from 200 to 300 men, transported in swift steam launches and working at night. "Larger enterprises, as a force over 2000, would not be attempted during early days of war with France." Raids would occur only if command of the Channel was temporarily lost.¹

Chapman's arguments and vocabulary were straight from the writings of Colomb. That such an important figure as the Director of Military Intelligence should employ Blue Water arguments in a War-Office inter-departmental note indicates that some sophistication was taking place in War Office strategic thinking. Opposition to the home defence scheme had always existed in the House of Commons and protests were registered sporadically during the decade that forts were being erected on land used for public recreation. In 1896 one M.P. asked for debating time to reconsider the whole policy of building forts, but nothing came of his question. Sir Charles Dilke also complained that the House had never debated the "Defence of London" policy.²

The public at large were also deeply interested in home defence. The huge quantity of articles dealing with the subject in journals of greatly varying quality and character implies a widespread interest and enthusiasm in military matters on the part of the British public that was probably at its height during the 1890s. It was only natural that the defence of the home island should be the object of prime consideration in the revival

1. WO 32/271. "Memo: Movable Columns to Repel Minor Coast Attacks." D.M.I. 11 November 1895.

2. Hansard (Commons) 3 July 1893. cols. 678-79; 17 April 1896, col. 1176. Times. 30 January 1897. p. 11.

of public interest in military matters in the years following 1888.

The home defence writers were generally agreed on the remedies for a more efficient home defence: more grants and better equipment, especially artillery for the Volunteers, more marksmanship practice, and more extensive manoeuvres for the home defence forces. The existing home manoeuvres were an affront to such devotees of home defence as Colonel Lonsdale Hale, who lamented in the National Review that

Only by a tremendous stress of imagination can a route march of a division of Regulars, depleted by Christmas furloughs, a night march prepared for the Volunteers six weeks in advance, or a four-hours perambulation on the Caterham Hills by a few sergeants of that force be seriously treated as preparation for Home Defence.¹

Sir Charles Dilke agreed with those military writers who argued that England should have manoeuvres on the large scale in England. These would provide Generals with experience in the handling of large groups of men, and which would most closely approximate the actual strategic situation of invasion.² Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, a former War Minister, provided a telling criticism of this demand, from the point of view of Gladstonian Liberalism, in a Parliamentary reply to Dilke, over the audible protests of some unknown military 'reformer'.

He said, "Why have we not great manoeuvres?" Has my right hon. friend forgotten that the enclosed nature of this country, cut up into small fields with hedges and ditches, precludes manoeuvres on a large scale? (Oh!) I say you cannot pass great bodies of troops over them without doing considerable damage to the owners and occupiers of property, which the country would not stand for one moment. ("Oh, oh.") Hon.

1. Col. Lonsdale Hale, "Autumn Manoeuvres, for Civilians." National Review. February 1895. p. 785.

2. "Sundries". United Service Magazine. March 1889. p. 672.

Members said "oh, oh!" but I am well acquainted with the matter, because I was in the War Office when we had great manoeuvres on Dartmoor, Cannock Chase, and Salisbury Plain, which are the only places in this country where manoeuvres to any considerable extent can be held this country does not require that sort of experience which is necessary in the case of European countries possessing a co-terminous frontier, and which must be always in a state of readiness, with Army Corps fully equipped to meet any sudden emergency, with trained Generals, and with the advantages for manoeuvres which we in this country do not possess.¹

The home defence critics attacked the existing manoeuvres from a completely different angle. Colonel Hale complained of the hoards of war stores and the construction of huge cities of canvas which made it impossible to introduce the elements of surprise and mobility into the war games, which, he charged, were "conducted in an atmosphere of unreality."

we dismiss mobility from the programme of instruction and practice, and we spend our time in firing away blank cartridges at each other, under conditions and situations which are the least likely to occur during the actual invasion of this country. The certain and the probable give place to performances, almost theatrical, of the uncertain and improbable.²

The way towards London, Hale continued, lay through difficult ground. Invading cavalry would have to canter on the high ground while the main army threaded itself laboriously through winding country lanes. Close cover would be a predominant feature of any future campaign in Great Britain, yet all existing manoeuvres were carried out on open ground under conditions that had no relation to the future tactical reality.³ Similar views were brought forward by one Colonel Clayton in the United Service Magazine, who urged that the Government take measures which would use

1. Sir Charles Dilke. Hansard (Commons) 9 March 1893. col. 1526.

2. Hale. Op. Cit. p. 787-88.

3. Ibid. pp. 790-92.

large areas of land which lay in the probable line of a French advance on London, so that practicing forces could "pass over it freely in all directions as would be done in war."¹ Once the defences had become accustomed to the true tactical conditions of the British countryside, they could exploit them to advantage. Enemy cavalry scouts would be greatly restricted in their reconnaissance, and British artillery could do murderous work on the invading legions, tightly trapped in the narrow winding roads of Kent and Surrey. The invaders could easily be slowed and harrassed, when speed was essential to the success of their enterprise.

Colonel Clayton remonstrated:

An English fox-hunter, mounted for the purpose and unarmed, can only cross an ordinary country in winter with the probability of getting any distance without accident. Is a foreign Cavalry, heavily weighed and encumbered with weapons, likely to get far in summer, the most probable season for an invasion? Would not five-and twenty English-men with rifles, in their own fields, laugh at a whole regiment, nay, brigade, of foreign cavalry attempting to scour an English country? 2

Home defence writers also pointed out that the aggressors would be hampered by the enclosed topography of the English countryside, so different from that of the Continent, which would virtually transform the tactical situation. Continental invaders, used to manoeuvres in open rolling country, they asserted, would become confused and despondent in the hillocks and aimless country lanes of Kent. The author of the R.U.S.I. Military Prize Essay for 1891, on "The Tactical Operations of the Future", emphasized the difficult fighting conditions of

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1. Col. R.A. Clayton. "Defensive Preparations in England." United Service Magazine. January 1896. p. 349.
 2. Ibid. p. 351.

close country like England, where hedgerows and fences of every description prevent any important movement of mounted troops, except where a great command over the country exists. Any soldier who has seen the great rolling slopes on most Continental battle fields, where unrestricted view can be obtained to long artillery ranges, and who then mentally compares those countries with what we usually see in England, cannot but come to the conclusion that England is essentially an infantry country.¹

The implication was plain, according to the home defence enthusiasts: the huge continental armies would be cut up into small bodies of troops by England's small roads, and these forces could be dealt with piecemeal locally by small groups of Volunteers and other Auxiliaries. Captain C.E. Benson, who wrote the prize essay, believed that the introduction of repeating rifles, machine guns, and smokeless powder, would bring four great changes in European military tactics. Cavalry would be largely used to fight dismounted. The use of artillery would be more difficult, as the enemy would have more natural cover, and moreover would be open to capture by infantry. The mobility of heavy weapons, Benson believed, would become a problem, and this would restrict the use of artillery, machine guns, and artillery. The machine gun was a useful weapon of surprise, especially against cavalry and closed ranks of infantry, but it, in turn, had much to fear from accurate artillery.² Other home defence enthusiasts advanced the claims of the bicycle and armoured trains as devices to repel the invader.³

1. Capt. C.E. Benson, R.A. "The Tactical Operations of the Future." R.U.S.I. Journal. April 1891. p. 422.

2. Ibid. pp. 395-434.

3. United Service Magazine. January 1892. p. 310; "The Railways and the Manoeuvres." Ibid. October 1898 pp. 71-98; Captain F.W. Maude. Invasion and Defence of England. Thacker, Spink & Co., Calcutta, 1888; George Findlay. "On the Use of Railways for the Conveyance of Troops." United Service Magazine. April 1892. pp. 41-47; WO 32/236. "... the defence of the North Shore of the Thames Against a Hostile Landing." R.J. Hay. 14 December 1891; Col. W. Guise-Tucker. "Armoured Trains and Batteries of Position." United Service Magazine. December 1897. pp. 254-258; For

(continued next p.)

The partisans of the 'hedgerow defence' found much consolation in speculations such as these, as well as the increasing availability of repeating rifles and smokeless powder during the 1890's. These developments seemed to enhance the traditional mystique of the English sharpshooter, established in his trench or hedgerow, picking off selected representatives of the invading army troops. These two developments added invisibility and increased firepower to rifleman defenders, and were frequently cited by supporters of the Volunteers. What is more remarkable was that the tactical debate was centred almost completely upon the contingency of an invading French force marching on London from the South. Almost no mention was made of the possibility of a German invasion from the North, which would have involved a series of rapid marches across flat, low-lying country, with which German officers and troops would have been thoroughly familiar. The invasion bogey had a fairly restricted standard specification, and speculations diverging from the myth of a Gallic rush on London from the South, were decidedly rare.

But the home defence enthusiasts were gradually losing the battle of public opinion. By 1890, the Blue Water School was in the ascendancy in the service journals and at the R.U.S.I. From the beginning the Colombs had also enjoyed the editorial support of the Times¹ which threw open its

3. (contd. from previous p.) comparisons of the cycle and horse: Col. Eustace Balfour. United Service Magazine. January 1893. pp. 622-623; "A Looker On." St. James' Gazette. 17 April 1900. p. 13; St. James' Gazette. 17 March 1900. p. 5; 24 March 1900, p.5; W.E. Cairns. "The problem of Invasion." National Review. November 1900. p.14; Spectator. 11 August 1900, pp. 166-67; Major-General Frederick Maurice. "Cycling as an Aid to Home Defence." R.U.S.I. Journal. January 1902. pp. 11-14.

1. Times. 3 January 1889, p.9; 11 January 1889, p. 9.

correspondence column to the Colombas and their allies, and reported their various speeches. The appearance of Mahan's The Influence of Sea Power Upon History in 1890 fostered an interest in naval history and sea power that involved a much wider public. Admiral Colomb also continued to educate the British public in the lessons of sea-supremacy. The first and most voluminous of his writings was Naval Warfare: Its Ruling Principles and Practice Historically Treated, which was written as the reference case-book of the Blue Water persuasion. Although not as literally polished as Mahan's contemporary work, it was more directly related to the current controversy over national defence. The work was divided into three main sections, the last and most detailed of which dealt with the invasion question, considering in detail every attempted attack made between 1690 and 1805.¹ The Admiral explained in his Preface that he had extended this section to over 55% of the length of the book "in order to combat the strongest prepossessions of the public mind today."²

In 1892 Colomb fostered another project, to reach an even wider audience. He wrote a prophecy of a European War, according to the doctrines of the Blue Water School, as a counterfoil to the many pamphlets which had appeared predicting future invasion. Colomb enlisted several experts to help him in this project, including General Frederick Maurice, Captain William Laird Clowes, and Captain F.W. Maude. Their joint effort, entitled The Great War of 189- appeared in the illustrated weekly, Black and White. Instead of describing an invasion, the story featured the role

1. Schurmann. Op. Cit. pp. 53-54.

2. Rear Admiral Philip H. Colomb. Naval Warfare: Its Ruling Principles and Practice Historically Treated. W.H. Allen, London, 1891. p. vii.

of the Fleet in guarding the Channel, and the fighting on land in the story was restricted to the Continent. After appearing as a serial, the war prophecy was reprinted in book form, going through two editions in English, and through five in a German translation.¹ Admiral Colomb, however, did not desert his original audience, and continued to produce learned articles on the history of the invasion question for the R.U.S.I. Journal, as well as various books and articles.² He and his allies did all they could to disseminate their views. For example, the subject chosen for the 1890 R.U.S.I Prize Essay was set as "The Maritime Defence of the United Kingdom ... Showing the Fleet Considered Necessary and its disposition." On another occasion, Sir John Colomb in connection with the Navy League and the National Review offered a £50 prize for a "story calculated to promote public appreciation of British Naval requirements and to popularise knowledge of the magnitude of the problems embraced in the maintenance of our sea-supremacy."³ After his retirement from the Admiralty as First Sea Lord, Admiral Richard Vesey Hamilton also lent his pen to the cause, and in 1896 pointed out the fallacy of the public's "unreasonable fear of invasion from France" in a long and historically-oriented article in

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1. Admiral P.H. Colomb, General Frederick Maurice, F.W. Maude, et al. The Great War of 189--. Heinemann, London, 1895. Black and White, December 1891 - March 1892. I.F. Clarke. Voices Propheying War. O.U.P., 1966. p. 66.
 2. For additional works by Admiral Colomb relating to the invasion controversy, see: "Imperial Defence." The Naval Annual, 1889-pp. 1-20; "Notes on the attempted Invasions of Ireland by the French in 1796-98." R.U.S.I. Journal. January 1892. pp. 17-33; Essays on Naval Defence, London, 1893; Combined Naval and Military Expeditions. London, 1896; "The Functions of the Navy and Army in the Defence of the Empire." R.U.S.I. Journal. December 1896. pp. 1423-1459; "The Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Consider the Defences of the United Kingdom." R.U.S.I. Journal. April 1898. pp. 456-467.
 3. R.U.S.I. Journal. (1890) pp. 397-440; National Review. June 1898. pp. 477-478.

The Nineteenth Century.¹ From time to time, too, the quarrel between the two services broke out into the open in discussions at the R.U.S.I. in which Wolseley, the Colomb, and the traditional protagonists took part.²

Under the impetus of the growing popularity of Mahan and a growing interest in defence natural to an imperialist age, the ideas of the Blue Water writers became common currency in the halls of Parliament, where Sir John Colomb sat for Yarmouth, and in the pages of newspapers, journals, pamphlets, and books. The advocates of home defence fought back in similar fashion, defending their ideas through the large Volunteer lobby in the House of Commons, and voicing their views also through the press and various periodicals. A typical example of the incessant infighting between the two pressure groups took place in December 1896, when the Duke of Devonshire, in a speech to the British Empire League, stated that the maintenance of sea-supremacy was the basis of the defence of the Empire. The remark was seized upon by Blue Water partisans as proof that the Government endorsed their position.³ Matters were not advanced when Lord Wolseley, now Commander-in-Chief, delivered an apparently contradictory statement in the course of an after-dinner speech at Perth, saying

It would be absolutely absurd for any nation to depend exclusively and solely on its fleet ... he knew of nothing that was more liable to disaster and danger than anything that floated on the water. They often found in peace and in the calmest weather their best ironclads running into one another. They found great

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1. Admiral Richard Vesey Hamilton. "Our Invasion Scares and Panics." Nineteenth Century. March 1896. pp. 399-415.
 2. Capt. W.H. James. "The Necessity for an Army as well as a Navy for the Maintenance of the Empire." R.U.S.I. Journal. May 1896. pp. 691-718; Admiral P.H. Colomb. "The Functions of the Army and Navy in the Defence of the Empire." Ibid. December 1896. pp. 1423-1457; Capt. W.H. Harrison. "The Invasion of England: Should London Be Fortified?" Ibid. February 1897. pp. 167-200.
 3. Times. 4 December 1896. p. 9.

storms dispersing and almost destroying some of the finest fleets that ever sailed. Therefore, it was essentially necessary for this country that they should always have a powerful Army, at least sufficiently strong to defend their own shores.¹

Wolseley's opinion on the subject had been ventilated before in the R.U.S.I. lecture hall,² but in the charged atmosphere of the moment his remarks were strongly resented, especially his veiled reference to the Victoria-Camperdown disaster in the Naval Manoeuvres of 1893, in which one ironclad rammed and sank another in broad daylight. Admiral Colomb wrote to the Times, asking them to take notice of the Duke of Devonshire's statement of policy and publicize it, and ridiculing what he believed to be Wolseley's position.

The idea that military defences alone - that is, after the failure or the collapse of the naval defence - can generally avail is only one step further in foolishness than the idea that naval defence alone will suffice. There is no certainty in any schemes of Imperial Defence which does not call upon the Navy to limit the attack to which the Army is open. Short of this the military force in any territory attackable from over sea must be so great as to defy the whole of the armies of any States designing its conquest ...³

Commenting on Colomb's letter, the Times lamented that the country had spent £19 million on passive defences and fortifications in the last generation, and was heartened by the fact that the Admiralty had assumed the responsibility to prevent invasion.

1. "Lord Wolseley at Perth." Ibid. p.6.

2. R.U.S.I. Journal. May 1896. pp. 717-18.

3. "The Authorised Scheme of Defence." Times. 26 December 1896. p. 9.

so long as the Admiralty discharge this responsibility, there is nothing left for local defence to do except to provide against such feeble and fugitive attacks from over the sea as are alone compatible with an adverse command of the sea. Beyond this provision all forms of fixed and passive defence against sea-attack are only a costly and futile diversion of resources.¹

This had now been announced authoritatively by the Duke of Devonshire, who was now the chief Government authority on defence. Wolseley's speech had revealed that War Office policy was still inadequate. In addition, the Times lamented that statements such as these tended to breed dissention and to introduce a deplorable confusion between the services, instead of loyal and cordial cooperation. The Government, however, was the final court of appeal between the Army and Navy, and it had now delivered its verdict. Regarding Wolseley's views, the Times remonstrated that "we are entitled, and indeed compelled, to regard his speech at Perth as merely the expression of a pious opinion." The controversy boiled over into the correspondence columns.²

Both Colomb's letter and the Times first leader aroused the wrath of the War Office, for shortly thereafter Major-General J.C. Ardagh, the Director of Military Intelligence, produced a caustic memorandum entitled "... the (so-called) 'Authorized Scheme of Defence' ..." which referred to the "implausible and mischievous assumption" of the Times leader that the Fleet alone was sufficient protection against invasion. In a series of alliterations which indicated his emotional involvement, Ardagh accused

1. Times 26 December 1896. p. 7.

2. Ibid. 2 January 1897, p. 12. 5 January 1897 p.12 ; 7 January 1897, p.8; 9 January 1897, p. 7.

Colomb and the Times of having "misunderstood, misrepresented, and mis-applied" the Duke's statement, and of having constructed theory out of thin air. Ardagh showed that the two services agreed on the necessity for the maintenance of sea supremacy, absolute freedom of movement for naval forces, and recognition of the possibility of attack in the absence of the fleet. The point of contention was "proportioning preparations for defence to the probable strength of attack, both afloat and ashore." In other words, the Army and Navy disagreed on the scale of attack to which the United Kingdom was liable. But in any event, Ardagh asserted, it was dangerous to pretend "that the naval forces will be - like the Deity - omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent." The fleet was not infallible, and the danger was great. Ardagh described

the rich and densely peopled shores of the United Kingdom, and the ports in which the commerce of the world congregates - both within a few hours steaming of the shores of the great military powers of Europe, and consequently open, in the absence of the fleet, to sudden raids of a far more serious character than our distant colonies are exposed to.¹

The contingency of a raid must be provided for, and military preparations on shore must be sufficient to guard the country and the capital, especially, against enemy adventures in the absence of the Fleet.

Ardagh expanded his arguments in dealing with the Defence of London, in which he captured the essence of the competition between the two services.

Against some risks, the Admiralty offers very reliable policies, against others, the War Office can insure on more favourable terms. In the latter class falls the category which has just been enumerated. Successive governments have to hold the balance between the blandishments and attractions held out in the prospects of the two rival syndicates.²

To attract the Cabinet to a military defence of the capital, Ardagh used his favourite argument of cost-effectiveness.

1. WO 32/218. A453. "Memorandum on the (so-called) 'Authorised Scheme of Defence', and on the Defence of London." 19 January 1897. p. 5.

2. Ibid. p. 8.

Roughly speaking, the capital required to maintain half-a-dozen line of battleships, would provide and keep up a hundred forts and batteries of the same power ... Wherever, therefore, we have a definite locality to defend, forts are incomparably more economical than ships; and, it may be added, more reliable, inasmuch as they are not likely to be blown up by torpedo, sunk by a ram, or disabled by a storm..¹

The controversy resounded in the House of Commons when it was announced that further expenditure was required for the London Defence scheme. Thirteen forts had been built since 1888 for £68,000; another £96,000 was now required to complete storehouses and provide access to the works. The Government further pleased the home defence lobby by presenting a Military Manoeuvres Bill, which would provide for full-scale war exercises in Britain, and in requesting £500,000 to provide for the setting up of a national network of rifle ranges. A Government spokesman gave substance to the proposals by observing that 50,000 National Guardsmen and 3000 gunners could defend a fortified London against an army of 300,000 invaders, when the same force in the open field would be routed by a few thousand enemy horse.² The reaction of the House was mixed. Sir John Colomb described the proposed expenditure of £200,000 as a soothing syrup for the credulous of the capital, although Sir Charles Dilke supported the proposal as insurance against invasion panic, while yet protesting that the policy of fortifying the capital had never been discussed by the Commons. Colonel Welby, one of the Volunteer lobbyists, sketched a possible future war in which a Continental coalition might close off the Channel long enough for a French landing. The Times commented editorially that the fortifications

1. WO 32/218. A453. p. 8.

2. Times. 30 January 1897. p. 9.

were of dubious value, and recommended that the policy be rigorously examined before adoption.¹

In a later leading article, the Times reported that the Duke of Devonshire had been amazed that his statement on sea-power had been regarded as a novel departure in doctrine: he himself believed that expenditure on fortifications were not always wasted. The Times announced its accord with this position, for forts could deal with a "raiding attack" which was "evasive" rather than "invasive" in character. But the millions spent on fortifications in the past had resulted from a long period of peace, in which the principles of sound strategy had been forgotten. During the Napoleonic struggle, the Commons had refused to sanction even quite modest fortifications.²

The controversy over a home defence policy had become so pronounced by this time that it attracted the notice of even literary journals. The Edinburgh Review commented upon the great growth of interest in national defence and adopted a position mid-way between the two contending schools of home defence. It allowed that naval misadventure was possible and that invasion, if difficult, was possible, if careful preparations were made beforehand. But at the same time it pointed out that the "hedge-row defence" idea was romantic nonsense, for the closed country of England would favour the attacker and the better-trained troops. It advocated instead that

1. Times 30th January 1897. p.11.

2. Ibid. 13 February 1897. p. 11.

A strong field army of mobile troops, capable of speedy concentration, is the only means by which London, in case the Channel is held by hostile battleships, can be defended.¹

The establishment of military depots at various points surrounding the capital would provide mobility to the defenders, as well as equipment to dig trenches, which would provide a final bar to the invader.

Spokesmen for the War Office also appeared in the arena of public opinion, and did their best to propagate the War Office viewpoint and to discredit the Blue Water School. They charged that the navalists had mesmerized themselves with an exaggerated reverence for history, which they had reduced to a series of inflexible and immutable truths. An officer of the Military Intelligence Department wrote in the Nineteenth Century that historicism did not account for all possible factors involved in the problem of defence against invasion.

Even if one may pass by certain forced interpretations of very plain historical facts - needless now to specify since they recall many dreary and long-winded arguments that are best buried in oblivion, and also a certain assumption of infallibility with which modern commentators assert their dogma - one cannot avoid the conclusion that the cheery optimism which insists that no territorial attack will take place until naval superiority is asserted, is excessively dangerous, since whether supported by all the weighty evidence of history or the reverse, it is only an opinion, and one that is not accepted as a fundamental truth by either France or Germany - nations we may to-day or to-morrow find arrayed against us. If we recognise and anticipate the fact that foreign opinion is not with us in this matter we shall be safe, but if we wrap ourselves up in comfortable theories we incur the greatest risk.²

The navalist position was open to criticism on several grounds. Recent developments in naval technology, notably the torpedo and submarine, seemed

1. Edinburgh Review. April 1897. pp. 524-525.

2. Captain A Court (later Repington). "French Naval Policy in Peace and War." Nineteenth Century. January 1897. p. 148.

to cast a shadow of doubt over the validity of such concepts as "command of the sea", which were based on the firepower of powerful surface fleets. The navalists were furthermore overly dependent on theory, because there was no pragmatic evidence available: no combat between modern fleets had taken place for decades. But the controversy was not sterile and academic in nature, for the battle between the protagonists of the two services enlivened the interest of the public in matters of national defence, and in time would provide a body of doctrine for British policy-makers when principles of national strategy were eventually to be settled. Many of these policy makers were veterans of the unremitting debate that took place in the Houses of Parliament, the R.U.S.I., the service magazines, and the correspondence columns of the Times. One Times letter column debate alone involved a future Prime Minister and two of his most important advisors-to-be on the question of distinguishing between an invasion and a raid,¹ and the interest generated in this exchange of views had its impact in later official policy. The interservice debate of the '90s had important ramifications for the future, and would provide an important precedent for later policy makers when they began to take up the question of a national strategy.

While the protagonists of various approaches to the invasion menace debated their cases in the quality reviews and service magazines, two developments in British society were slowly and simultaneously changing the anatomy of British public debate. The Education Acts of 1870, 1880, and 1891 had slowly created a literate British proletariat; at the same

1. A.J. Balfour, G.S. Clarke, Julian Corbett. Times. 20 May 1901 p. 14. 25 May 1901, p. 15; 31 May 1901, p. 12; 3 June 1901, p.6; 6 June 1901, p. 12; 15 June 1901, p. 5; 22 June 1901, p. 9. See also David Hannay. "Invasion or Raid." MacMillans' Magazine. August 1901. pp. 311-320.

time the Reform Bills of 1867 and 1884 had invested a sizeable proportion of this class with the vote, and political power. These two factors were soon to be felt in the debate over invasion, and in defence matters in general. A recent analyst of British war literature of the 1890s has commented

What had hitherto been a middle-class exchange between the service writers and the readers of the monthly reviews and the Times quickly became an open market in which distinguished admirals competed and sometimes co-operated with enterprising journalists for the attention of the general reader.¹

Nowhere was the new formula of printing for the emerging mass market more successful than in the rapidly-rising publishing empire of Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe). Harmsworth, whose formal education had ended at the age of 15, was well equipped by circumstances to know what would appeal to this new mass audience, and he early discovered that the theme of war in general, and invasion in particular, were highly popular and lucrative circulation builders. Until Harmsworth, alarmists and pamphlet writers had used fictional prophecies of future invasion and disaster as a means of bringing about military reforms. Harmsworth, although he was careful to pose as a reformer also, was primarily concerned with selling newspapers and magazines. The prototype of the Harmsworth invasion story was a serial in his illustrated weekly, Answers, in December 1893, timed to coincide with a Franco-Russian naval scare.² The serial in its earliest instalments was a typical melodrama of the period, played against the background of international intrigue. However, after it had run three weeks, Harmsworth wrote to his editors to give the invasion element

1. I.F. Clarke. Op. Cit. p. 64.

2. A.J. Marder. Op. Cit. pp. 174-205.

in the story more prominence. He complained

The stories do not contain enough war scenes. I should cut down to a minimum the hero and heroine's part and give plenty of battles, naval and land. So far, three long installments have appeared and the only execution done is the bombardment of Newhaven and Brighton.¹

In accordance with Harmsworth's directive, later chapters of the story announced in bold 18-point type "The Massacre of Eastbourne", "Panic in Manchester", and the "Battle of Birmingham," and kindred blood baths throughout the United Kingdom. At the same time the title of the story was changed from The Poisoned Bullet to the more emotive Great War in England in 1897. The serial ran in Answers for over six months, providing full illustrations of the supposed horrors of invasion, and was immediately thereafter published as a book which ran through five editions in the first month of publication, and went through 26 editions all told.² The story was commended by Wolseley and the Duke of Connaught, and drew the following endorsement from Lord Roberts; who wrote to Harmsworth

I entirely concur with you in thinking it most desirable to bring home to the British public in every way possible the dangers to which the nation is exposed unless it maintains a Navy and Army sufficiently strong and well organized to meet the defensive requirements of the Empire.³

The plot of the story was based upon the recently-concluded Franco-Russian alliance, and predicted that the two nations would attack England following joint manoeuvres in the Fall of 1897. In the story, the invaders are aided by a despicable array of traitors and aliens, identified variously as Jewish spies, "Anarchists, Socialists, and 'No War' partisans" who perpetrate riot and bomb outrages in London even as the enemy hordes

1. Geoffrey Harmsworth and Reginald Pound. Northcliffe. Cassell, London, 1959. p. 151.

2. Clarke. Op. Cit. p.65; Harmsworth and Pound. Op. Cit. p. 152.

3. William Le Queux. The Great War in England in 1897. Newnes, London, 1894.

surge up from their landing-place at Brighton. Westminster Abbey is blown up, the National Gallery sacked and burned, and an attempt is made on the Prime Minister's life, before order is restored by martial law. Treachery reigns in the Admiralty, where the officer in charge of mobilization telegrams is stabbed and an Admiral carrying the naval cipher is poisoned. The allied armies over-run the South-east and threaten London, while Anarchists blow up railroad bridges and tunnels with morbid enthusiasm. The British economy grinds to a halt: factories stop, banks close, the price of bread doubles and redoubles, and mass starvation appears imminent. After a series of disasters reminiscent of the Ten Plagues of Egypt, Britain is belatedly saved by the intervention of the Kaiser. A German naval squadron joins with the Channel Fleet and defeats the Franco-Russian naval force. The invaders, cut off from their base, eventually surrender near Dorking.

Interestingly enough, the story was accorded the dignity of a full-length notice in the semi-official R.U.S.I. Journal. This commented

Mr. Le Queux has done good service in bringing before the eyes of the average British voter the consequences which must inevitably happen to him personally if he neglects to insist on the provision of a navy adequate to maintain unchallenged command of the sea ... we are compelled to admit that the risk of a raid by 200,000 men on London, given even a temporary command of the Channel, would be less from every point of view than the risks victoriously incurred by Napoleon in nine-tenths of his campaigns.

Mr. Le Queux has also scarcely done himself justice in the design of his book. Its popularity would not have been jeopardised in the least by the addition of more detailed information as to the actual strategic development of the situations. Reading the book carefully, it is evident that he had a concrete idea before him as he wrote, but it takes some close thinking, and a fairly complete knowledge of the country, to judge whether the plan is in accordance with probability or mere assertion based on inaccurate data. In our opinion

based on twenty years' close study of the problem, the sequence of events is probable, and the data essentially correct.¹

The reviewer himself would eventually write a forecast of an invasion of England.²

The next year, 1895, Harmsworth tried to repeat his success, and asked Le Queux to compose a second invasion epic, but the writer wrote that he was ill. The mantle of invasion-monger then fell upon Beckles Willson, a youthful Canadian freelance writer then working for Harmsworth, assisted by William Laird Clowes, a stern disciple of naval defence who had already written the naval episodes in The Great War of 1892. The forthcoming story had several causes to champion. First, of course, it claimed to call attention to Britain's improvidence. It was also another would-be circulation booster, appearing in the Portsmouth Mail only five days after that paper came under Harmsworth's control. Most of all, it was hoped it would draw attention to Harmsworth himself, who was running as the Unionist candidate for Parliament from Portsmouth in the General Election of 1895. The authors were accordingly instructed to include local figures and dignitaries in the story, and to present them in the most favourable light possible. Nothing was left to chance. Enormous and lurid posters appeared throughout Portsmouth, depicting an armed horde advancing with drawn bayonets upon the Town Hall. Willson described how

Around and above them shell and bombs exploded and the square were (sic) strewn with dead and dying men, women and children. Superimposed was the legend in the fattest and blackest majuscules:

'THE SIEGE OF PORTSMOUTH'!!!

THE MOST ASTOUNDING AND SENSATIONAL STORY OF THE DAY !!!³

1. Captain F.W. Maude. R.U.S.I. Journal. September 1894. p. 1022.

2. Captain F.W. Maude. The New Battle of Dorking. Grant Richard, London, 1900.

3. The Portsmouth Mail. 18 July 1895. p. 1

However, it was all in vain. The story did nothing to build up the circulation of the paper. Even worse, Harmsworth lost the election, coming in fourth in a field of four candidates in a year of a Unionist landslide. Although unsuccessful, The Siege of Portsmouth showed the Harmsworth touch, for he had taken almost personal direction of the plot to foster his Parliamentary candidacy. Like The Great War in England in 1897, it pictured a sanguinary Franco-Russian invasion of Britain in the Fall of 1897. The enemy was presented as bloodthirsty and rapacious: the French troops were pictured landing secretly on British soil at midnight on the third day of the war.

With the greatest difficulty the officers prevented the men from bursting forth into cheers. "À Londres!" "À bas Angleterre!" were words more than murmured by a thousand lips, moist with thoughts of bloodshed, rapine, and victory.¹

With this auspicious beginning, the invaders, including murderous Cossacks, complete the ruin of

outraged Eastbourne - whose streets ran blood and whose walls echoed the shrieks of the dying and defenceless ... themselves, their sons, their wives, and their daughters at the mercy of a foe who, reared on carnage, hate, and oppression, knew no mercy.²

Readers were warned that a man whose wives and daughters were involved in the sack of a city by French troops would have no more happiness if he was a man. Occasion was taken too to point out the derelictions of the Liberals in regard to the national defences: in the story, Campbell-Barnerman barely escaped a lynch mob bent on revenging his incompetence as War Minister, and his house is sacked and burned instead. However, all

1. The Portsmouth Mail. 27 June 1895. p. 1.

2. Ibid.

ends well as the invaders are finally defeated and the allies again surrender.

Another variation on the theme was produced by Louis Tracy, who was an editor of Harmsworth's Evening News. Encouraged by Le Queux's success, Tracy adopted his theme. Tracy was aided by the temper of the time, for the year 1896 was one of recurrent crises in which Britain incurred the wrath of Washington over the Venezuela dispute, offended France in Siam, was rebuked by the Kaiser over the Jameson Raid in the Transvaal, and tempted Russia to reconsider the invasion of India. As a reflection of this very unsplendid isolation, Tracy's story visualised the President of France plotting the dismemberment of the British Empire around a huge table in the Quai d'Orsay, with the connivance of the German and Russian Ministers. England was to be reduced to "a crippled island under the heel of a despotic military government, a tributary state ... a people crushed, ruined, and enslaved." However, Whitehall learns of the monstrous conspiracy in time, and the common peril galvanizes the nation into unity. A National Government is formed, which offers stout resistance to the Franco-German invaders. As the allies approach the English shore on the morning of May 3, 1898, they are met by small groups of heroic Volunteers who repulse repeated attempts at landing until the Regulars, rushed by rail to the coast, arrive with Maxims to complete their ruin. Perhaps in an attempt to improve their strategy, the Russians raid Cardiff in order to kidnap Admiral Mahan, but succeed only in hastening an American declaration of war. Although everywhere inferior, the Royal Navy succeeds with great gallantry in thwarting invasion.¹

1. Louis Tracy. The Final War. Pearsons, London, 1896.

Invasion fantasies such as these almost certainly moulded mass attitudes in the 1890s. Many of them originally appeared in serials in large-circulation newspapers and magazines, and ran indeterminately for months. Following this they were reprinted as lavish books, which frequently ran through several editions. We may infer an enthusiastic mass-readership, sustained on sensational themes of jingoism and xenophobia. They found ready acceptance at this time of aggressive Imperialism and chauvinism, when Continental hostility towards England was so pronounced as to make an attack upon the home island seem quite credible. The Government could not ignore the public clamour for national defence.

In early 1897 the Government proposed certain reforms designed to placate the defence-minded. The Government would underwrite the cost of rifle ranges throughout the country, improve and reform the defences between London and the coast, and purchase 40 acres of Salisbury Plain for war games on a larger scale, which would provide practice for British officers in the handling of large formations in the field. The necessary funds were voted by the Commons with celerity.¹

The Spectator ran a series of articles extending over several months in support of the reforms, emphasizing that an enemy might

create by a successful descent with two corps d'armée of thirty thousand men each so wild a panic among the civilian population as to disorganize the Administration, arrest industry for months, and turn London ... without means of paying wages, into what soldiers would describe as a hell upon earth.²

Further issues of the Spectator declared that defeat on the soil of the home island would signal a run on gold, the collapse of the sterling credit system, and the paralysis of the Empire. Banks would close while starving

1. Hansard (Commons) 4 February 1897, col. 1314; 8 February 1897, col. 1541.

2. "The New Defense Preparations." The Spectator. 6 February 1897. P. 199.

mobs roamed London and the effects of such a "Dark Week" would resound throughout British history. It would mean the end of British economic predominance, for foreign troops in London would reveal to all the world that the city was no longer safe for the deposit of gold. The present time was one of danger, for the nation had many enemies but not one dependable ally. It was urged that Britain be placed in the position of a fortress expecting attack; a minimum standard of defence would be the ability to destroy 80,000 aggressors within 48 hours of their landing. The Reserves should be mobilized, the best officers of the hour summoned, and the great resources of British industries dedicated to the task of defence. The Spectator charged that the millions were not drilled, and warned that money could not create artillery in five minutes. It charged that succeeding Cabinets shrunk from the facts, and merely tinkered with details, rather than provide a comprehensive plan for home defence. Fifty million men, the Spectator advised, should be raised in order to make the island impregnable, for if the citadel of London relapsed into anarchy this would bring ruin for two generations.¹

Agitation of this type, combined with the deteriorating international situation, was not without its effect on the Government. The 1898 Army estimates were described by St. John Brodrick, Under-Secretary of State for War, as

the largest establishment this House has ever been asked to vote this century, except during periods of European war, and the greatest increase ever proposed to the British Army in time of peace.²

1. The Spectator. "The Chances of Invasion." 17 April 1897. pp. 636-37; "An Invasion of England." 8 May 1897. pp. 653-54; "The Weak Place." 26 June 1897. p. 908.

2. Hansard (Commons) 25 February 1898. col. 32.

The Fall Manoeuvres on newly-purchased land at Salisbury Plain would be the first to involve troops and equipment on a massive scale for 26 years.¹ The reformers were not appeased, and the following debate saw further deficiencies in home defence brought forward.²

Later that year the warnings briefly appeared justified. On September 19, 1898, a small French column which had marched overland from the West African coast met a British army under Kitchener at Fashoda, a small town in the Sudan. For a short time, France and Britain were on the brink of war, as their fleets mobilized and the less inhibited elements of the Parisian press overflowed with more than the usual quantity of Anglophobe invective. Yet the Royal Navy quietly prepared, and the public calm was indeed a gratifying tribute to that small group of men who had for a decade been educating their countrymen in the lessons of seapower. It is certainly true that "of naval panic or war scare there was not a trace in England. Public opinion was very firm, being absolutely confident that a war between the two countries could result only in a second Trafalgar."³ The usual bellweathers of invasion alarm were silent: The Times, Daily Mail, Saturday Review, Review of Reviews, Nineteenth Century, National Review, and even the Spectator - all refused to speculate over invasion in their pages and instead rejoiced in French naval weakness and British sea supremacy. Commenting editorially on the calmness of the country in the time of crisis, the National Review gave credit to the Blue Water pedagogues and the "imperishable volumes" of Mahan, Colomb, and

1. Hansard. (Commons) 25 February 1898, col. 58.

2. Ibid. cols. 68, 196, 234.

3. A.J. Marder. Op. Cit. p. 320.

others in this task of national education.

If honour is ever to be given where it is due, we should recognise that we owe our magnificent navy not to any politician, or administrator, but to the handful of expert enthusiasts who were wisely allowed to educate the public through the Press.¹

But if the calmness of the opinion-moulding journals was indeed a tribute to the navalists, their counsels did not hold sway at the War Office, where a close watch was kept on the situation in France. At the peak of the crisis, a former military attache was sent to France by a devious route to inspect the Channel ports for signs of concentration of troops and shipping. No activity was reported.² At the same time the Assistant Adjutant-General met with the Director of Naval Intelligence to make estimates of the scale of attacks that might be expected at British ports in advance of a declaration of war. The D.N.I. was reassuring and stated his belief that the French could only mount night torpedo boat raids on harbours in the South.³ Wolseley wrote to Lord Lansdowne on Christmas Day, 1898, that new standards were necessary for the mobilization of the home defence forces. The old regulations, he charged, were "not suited for these days of steam, and seem based upon unworthy suspicion of those who had formerly command of the army." Reforms were required to speed up the reaction-time of the home defences against aggression.⁴ But such concern was not shared by all at the War Office. Colonel John Ardagh, the

1. National Review. December 1898. p. 466.

2. W.H.H. Waters. Secret and Confidential. Murray, London, 1926. pp.248-9

3. WO 32/271. Stopford to Wolseley, 9 January 1899.

4. WO 32/271A. Wolseley to Lansdowne, 25 December 1899.

Director of Military Intelligence, spent his Christmas holidays reading R.U.S.I. Prize Essays on home defence: most of which he found "inordinately verbose and tedious."¹

In his traditional speech at the Guildhall (November 9th) Salisbury warned Britons that if they allowed

our defences at sea to fall to such a point of inefficiency that it is as easy, or nearly as easy, to cross the sea as it is to cross a land frontier; our great Empire, stretching to the ends of the earth, supported by maritime force in every part of it, will come clattering to the ground when a blow at the Metropolis is struck. Our whole existence ... all depends on our being able to defend our own shores against attack, and that ability depends on our power at any moment of summoning to our aid a maritime force far larger than any opponent can bring to bear against us.²

This speech betrayed the fact that the Prime Minister, even though convinced of the need for a big Navy, remained deaf to the more advanced teaching of the Blue Water School that a "Fleet in being" would deter invasion even across contested seas. Elsewhere, there were indications that should an enemy ever find his way ashore, the road to London would be an easy one. The Fall Manoeuvres of 1898, announced with such fanfare by Brodrick and carried out at a cost of £200,000, had revealed many glaring deficiencies in home defence. Major Rasch of the Volunteers charged in the House of Commons that the diversity and irregularity of the transport was the laughing-stock of every foreign military attache who witnessed the Manoeuvres.³ Captain G.W. Norton, Member for Newington West, said

1. Ardagh MSS. PRO 30/40/6. 23, 25 December 1898.

2. The Spectator. 12 November 1898. p. 676.

3. Hansard. (Commons) 2 March 1899. col. 1092.

I would ask any service member present whether the Volunteers, destitute as they are of any arrangements which would enable them to take the field, and destitute as they are of artillery, in the event of one single army corps of a foreign nation landing upon our shores would not be absolutely valueless and whether, through no fault of theirs, they would not be precisely in the same position of those gallant dervishes in front of Lord Kitchener's guns ... If we look to the breakdown of the arrangements on Salisbury Plain last year, when 50,000 were assembled, I think he must admit that before the Volunteers had been in the field for a week they would be destroyed or be in a state of semi-starvation.¹

He went on to predict correctly that no Army Reserves would be left to the country in the event of a great national crisis. These sentiments were not shared by officialdom, however. In announcing the 1899 Army Estimates, Mr. George Wyndham, Under-Secretary of State for War, envisaged "no heroic changes" for the coming year. He ended his speech in these words:

Thanks to the splendid devotion of our Regular, Auxiliary, and Colonial forces, I dare to believe that our small Volunteer Army is ready to solve the double and difficult problem of keeping the Queen's peace throughout her wide dominions, and of defending our shores.²

There were many that may have sympathised with these words, although the Queen's peace had only six more months to run.

Behind the scenes, both the War Office and Admiralty kept a watchful eye on France. The British naval attache reported from Paris on March 30th his belief that French naval policy included

keeping a strong military force in readiness, and numerous steam vessels of all kinds in the Channel ports, ready to embark a force to invade England if a favourable opportunity should arise.

Admiral Reginald Custance, the D.N.I., believed that the French army would become restless in the event of war, and would desire to strike a blow of

1. Hansard . (Commons) 2 March 1899. col. 1127.

2. Ibid. cols. 1080-81.

some sort against England. He warned that the teachings of Mahan would not deter them.

They are as ignorant now as in the past of the difficulties of the undertaking, so that it seems certain that the popular outcry will lead to a repetition of the attempt to invade this country. This may influence the whole course of the war.

Similar apprehensions were expressed by the military attaché in Paris, a week later, who reported - correctly, in the event - that the French General Staff were studying the project. For the French army, nourished on Napoleonic traditions, he noted, the invasion of England was

a very seductive subject and it is my firm opinion that the French never have understood and never will understand it, a fact that makes an eventual attempt at invasion all the more probable.

The D.N.I. agreed that ignorance of naval doctrine might tempt the French into such an adventure, but Admiral Frederick Richards, the First Sea Lord, drily observed that this chance was "too good to be probable."¹ Both attachés had failed to realize that part of French naval policy at this time included ostentatious preparations for invasion in order to pin the British Army and Channel Fleet to the home island. French planners recognized the power of an invasion panic in England and planned a theatrical mobilization near Calais in the event of war because, as one French officer wrote, "the menace of a landing has such an unreasonable influence on the English."²

In the aftermath of the Fashoda crisis, British fears of invasion were exacerbated by certain Parisian journals, for which the project held a special fascination. Various invasion conjectures appeared in print which were quickly translated and commented upon by the British press and periodicals. La Patrie announced in April that

1. Marder. Op. Cit. p. 339

2. Theodore Hopp. Development of a Modern Navy: French Naval Policy 1871-1904. Harvard Ph.D., 1937. p. 355.

The best-informed and highest military authorities state that, considering the efficiency of the French army and the utter want of discipline in the army of England, ten French regiments would suffice to annihilate the forces of Great Britain ...

It went on to prophesy how London would be sacked and the Queen forced to take refuge in Scotland. Harmsworth's Daily Mail, the most popular newspaper in Britain, with over 600,000 copies sold daily,¹ was quick to translate and publicise such French conjectures. During the spring of 1899 the Daily Mail reprinted several French projects which indicated hostility to England and hinted at preparations for an eventual invasion. Dunkirk was being considered as a staging-point for the invasion fleet and the improvement of its harbour was suggested. When a French journal dilated on the theme that the invasion of England must be attempted on the grounds that every previous attack had succeeded, the Daily Mail commented that this in fact had been the case. To the despair of the Blue Water authorities who could reel off a long list of failed invasion attempts, the Mail argued that, until 1814, France had remained more inviolate than Britain. Furthermore, the paper remonstrated, three developments had undermined the British position. The combined French and Russian fleets had a better balance of naval power against England than France and Spain had enjoyed at Trafalgar, British war-ships were now dispersed over the globe in defence of the Empire, where they had then been concentrated in home waters, and England had, in the half-century since Waterloo, lost the ability to feed herself. These same

1. According to the Daily Mail reference library, the average daily sale of the paper during 1899 was 610,325.

arguments, the Mail warned, were being advanced in Paris, and might prevail.¹

When it became known that even the sober and respected Revue des Deux Mondes had published an anonymous and authoritative article on the best method to convey a French army across the Channel, apprehensions were expressed by several British newspapers and journals. The contentious plan was based on the mass-production of a landing-craft, similar in its main features^{LC1} to the LST of the Second World War. It was advocated that vessels be produced on the lines of shallow-draft powered river barges, but modified by water-tight compartments and the addition of armour plates and detachable keels, for high-seas navigation. It was proposed that a thousand of these specialized craft be secretly constructed and towed to the French coast through the internal canal system. This number would suffice for the conveyance of 170,000 Regular troops and some horses to England. As the barges approached the British coast, the detachable keels would be dropped and the barges taken inshore as far as possible on the crest of the tide. British resistance, it was estimated, would be feeble, and could be met by a revolving 47 mm quick-firing cannon and machine gun in the bow of the landing craft, while the 15 to 20 men in each vessel took shelter behind steel plates. The writer claimed that this miniature armada would endow the English with a new and permanent respect for French aspirations and could be constructed for less than the cost of five French battleships.²

The scheme attracted widespread attention in England. The Times,

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1. "How to Annihilate Britain." Daily Mail. 19 April 1899. p.4; "To Wipe Out England." Ibid., 27 April 1899, p.5; "England Invaded." Ibid., 4 May 1899, p.7; "Landing an Army."
 2. "Les Descentes on Angleterre." Revue des Deux Mondes. March 1899. pp. 275-302. "Landing an Army."

which prided itself on its naval knowledge, reacted with semi-satirical scorn, referring to the invaders emerging from their sea-going ironclad Trojan horses, unruffled as if on a Cooks' excursion, covered by a rainbow of lead and fire.¹ Punch proved equal to the occasion and presented a comical account of the Gallic invaders undergoing the agonies of collective mal de mer.² The Spectator was skeptical and its leader attacked the French contention that the Channel crossing was an extended river crossing. Not only was the Channel extremely dissimilar to a river, but it was a very capricious and unpredictable ocean. In any event, British warships would make mincemeat of the French invasion barges.³ The Daily Mail was almost alone in showing signs of serious concern over a French attack,⁴ and its naval correspondent, H.W. Wilson, warned his countrymen in the pages of the National Review that the picture of a friendly France was a fiction. The French army, he warned, secretly despaired of success on the Rhine and the long history of French attempts at a conquest of Britain, which had culminated in this latest plan, proved that Britons must remain firm and watchful.⁵

The emotive issue of the invasion of the homeland is captured in a minor classic of British literature which first appeared in this period. H.G. Wells' War of the Worlds owed more to the contemporary theme of a French invasion of England than a superficial reading would reveal. Wells'

1. "The Invasion of England." Times. 21 March 1899. p. 7.
2. "The Invasion of England." Punch. 29 March 1899. p. 149.
3. "The Impending Invasion." The Spectator. 25 March 1899. pp. 408-09.
4. "Landing an Army." The Daily Mail. 31 May 1899. p. 7.
5. H.W. Wilson. "The Invasion of England." National Review. June 1899. pp. 654-663.

Martian invaders roam about Southern England with the same temerity and infallibility as the French and Russian hordes in the fictional invasion epics. The total defeat and humiliation of the defending British armies, the panic flight of the people, and the victorious advance of the enemy to a deserted London are all common themes. Even Wells' epilogue was evocative of the invasion stories written as national defence morality plays. Wells wrote

.. whether we expect another invasion or not, our view of the human future must be greatly modified by these events. We have learned now that we cannot regard this planet as being fenced in and a secure-abiding-place for Man; we can never anticipate the unseen good or evil that may come upon us suddenly out of space.¹

Transposed to the bizarre context of a Martian invasion of England, Wells here expressed the contemporary apprehensions regarding the possibility of invasion: awareness of surrounding hostile powers, apprehension over unprepared defences, and anxiety over an unforeseeable future surprise attack.

Fear of invasion, as a factor in British public life, had advanced steadily in importance in the course of the decade. Never had British diplomatic isolation seemed less splendid, for Europe in general, and France and Germany in particular, were unified in hostility against England, jealous of her Empire, threatening her trade, and challenging her naval and industrial power. Concern over invasion now engaged a larger spectrum of the British public than ever before, for the masses had now learned to read, and their concepts of national defence were influenced by the invasion novels and the Harmsworth press which catered, as Salisbury said,

1. H.G. Wells. The War of the Worlds. Heinemann, London, 1958. p. 223.

for those who could read but not think. Anxiety over invasion became an important factor in the calculations of Cabinet ministers, while the continuing controversy between the War Office and Admiralty intensified interservice suspicion and hostility. As the century came to a close, all these factors culminated in a crisis which suggested that invasion was far more than a merely theoretical possibility, making manifest the need for a coherent policy of national defence.

CHAPTER III: THE INVASION SCARE OF 1900

Anxieties over the state of home defence, which had been so prevalent a feature of British political life in the 1890s, finally came to a head at the end of the century. The catalytic event which seemed to expose Britain's military weakness, to a hostile Europe and an anxious citizenry alike, was the outbreak of the Boer War and the subsequent "Black Week" (9-15 December, 1899) in which three separate British armies were defeated by embattled Boer farmers. England was naked to her enemies, it appeared, and at a time when counsels of Anglo-phobia in all European capitals were reinforced by the spectacle of the British Empire warring against two tiny states of European settlers. It suddenly became apparent that this war was not to follow the familiar pattern of a colourful colonial campaign, but instead would be a war that would require a serious effort from the British army and people. In the ensuing months, as almost all of the small British Regular Army and most of the effective Auxiliary Forces were siphoned away to a war 7000 miles distant, and as the Continental powers adopted attitudes that at best were correct and at worst were menacing, it became apparent that only British seapower prevented the talk of invasion in Berlin and Paris from becoming a concrete military reality. British seapower was a sufficient deterrent to the military planners of Germany and France, but would it suffice to dampen the alarms and apprehensions of the British public? Almost a decade had passed since the gospel of seapower had first influenced British opinion. Fate had contrived a situation where Britain could now look to her Fleet alone for defence and the first effect of this was a heightened awareness of those factors of British military vulnerability and European hostility which had characterised

the preceding decade.

The shock of recognition that the home island was reduced to dependence upon her Fleet alone had profound repercussions. It initiated a long period of agitation for army reform, of a public obsession with national defence, and private anxiety over invasion. For almost two years, the nation's sense of insecurity was so pronounced and so pervasive that almost any stimulus would bring the bubbling cauldron of public opinion to a boil. A statement from some Continental authority would fill the columns of the press with alarm. The scare would gradually die down until some new revelation of British vulnerability would bring the possibility of invasion back into the foreground of public attention. As one set of newspapers and periodicals abandoned invasion, another set would take it up. Theodore Ropp, in his pioneer study of French naval policy, noted that the 1900 invasion scare was the first of its type that was ~~not~~ fostered by an alarmist statement from high authority.¹ The dynamics of the international and military situation go far to explain the force and spontaneity of the public outcry, which was only the logical climax to a decade of vociferous agitation during which British military strength in relation to other European powers declined. The obvious dereliction of home defence, the lack of any clear policy from the War Office or Cabinet, the jealous competition of the two services - all against the backdrop of a heavily-armed and increasingly hostile Europe - all seemed, but for British command of the Channel, to proclaim England's vulnerability to any invader.

These general features of the late nineteenth century were joined by other specific factors peculiar to Britain in 1900. First the central

1. Theodore Ropp. The Development of a Modern Navy: French Naval Policy. 1871-1904. Harvard Ph.D. dissertation, 1937, p. 536.

direction of the Government was far from robust and decisive. Salisbury, the Prime Minister, had begun his political career in the era of Palmerston and the French invasion scares of the 1850s and there was no indication that his intellectual equipment for devising a policy against invasion had developed much since then. By 1900 Salisbury was an old man of over 70 years of age, sick, and well past the peak of his powers. For the last three years his leadership and the unity of his party had been challenged by Joseph Chamberlain and his doctrines. Health, age, position - all conspired to make Salisbury indecisive and pessimistic. He therefore followed public opinion rather than led it, and the inconsistent courses of his speeches and policies regarding national defence inspired alarm and despondency.¹

A similar atmosphere of lassitude and indecision enveloped the War Office, where the two main dramatis personae of 1888, Ardagh and Wolseley, were still in power. The intervening twelve years had brought no sophistication of approach to military problems, and little evolution in policy. Wolseley, as Commander-in-Chief, presided over the military power of the British Empire with the mentality of a field officer in a series of small colonial wars. Although Wolseley once had had the reputation of a reformer, his mental processes were becoming increasingly ossified, and he was ill-qualified by experience and intellectual training, to deal with the involved questions of strategy and broader policy facing a major European power at the beginning of the twentieth century. Colonel John Ardagh, the Director of Military Intelligence, had a vigorous mind although it also moved within a fairly restricted frame of reference, especially in the matter of defence against invasion, for he had been the guiding spirit

1. J.A.S. Grenville. Salisbury and Foreign Policy. Athlone Press, London, 1965, pp. 322-23.

behind the Defence of London scheme of 1888. Energetic intuition, not thoughtful analysis, reigned at the War Office: personalities and ideas were unchanged. The War Office had never asked whether invasion was possible: it had merely provided a defence against it, and even this had not been carried into effect fully. But while Wolseley had provided no new policy, he had at least warned the Cabinet of the consequences of a distant war for home defence, even before the declaration of hostilities.¹ The Queen, too, a veteran of the mid-century invasion scares, expressed her concern, and the Prime Minister replied to her in cipher that he hoped to "take measures rendered necessary for the defence of the country when it has been so largely denuded of troops."² The Cabinet was also warned of another alarming aspect of the situation: the British war against the Boer farmers had earned her the hostility of all Europe. Sir Francis Plunkett reported from Paris that

in the present hysterical and neurotic state of the press more or less everywhere, it was not possible to ignore the danger that might arise from any sudden or unforeseen event which might set fire to public opinion in France, where the wound of Fashoda still rankles.³

At a hurriedly-convened meeting of the Defence Committee on December 20, 1899, Wolseley by way of preamble took a swipe at the Blue Water school.

I need not go over again here the often-repeated arguments to show the possibility of an invasion by France of Great Britain in spite of the protection afforded by our Fleet. The mere fact that I was to-day asked by the Defence Committee what measures I recommended to enable us to meet such an invasion justified me in assuming that its

1. WO 32/271 "Secret Memo by W." 30 September 1899.

2. Cab 41/25/22 "Cypher: Salisbury to Queen." 13 October 1899.

3. Cab 37/51/101 "The Effects of the South African War on the Policy of Great Powers." 26 December 1899.

possibility is fully admitted ...

As I understand the situation, it is, in general terms, as follows:- France owes us a deep grudge, and may endeavour to pay it off in the autumn of 1900, or even earlier, being encouraged to do this by the fact that the greater portion of the small army on which we are content to rely for the defence of our shores, is no longer in this country, but is committed to a difficult war 6,000 miles away.

Warming to his theme, Wolseley warned that "In the 11 years which have passed since 1888, neither the power, nor the will, of France to strike us, has in any way lessened. Rather they have both increased." British defence requirements were directly related to the striking power of France, and therefore Wolseley implored the Cabinet to provide the existing home defence force either with reinforcements or better equipment. If the force was not enlarged, the nation would drift throughout 1900 with only one division of Regulars left in the home island. He recommended that the force be increased by 42,500 troops: veterans, he believed, could be lured back into the service with promises of short service and high pay. This latter suggestion was rejected by the Cabinet as a "counsel of despair." Wolseley revealed that heroic measures were also required in home defence artillery: when Lord Roberts' requests were met, only one battery of 15 pound guns would remain in England. To remedy this anticipated deficiency, Wolseley urged that artillery be purchased from Krupp and Creuset to outfit the three Army Corps that made up the Home Army. All possible guns should be purchased from foreign gunmakers as soon as possible, as the war in South Africa was absorbing both the output of British factories and existing stocks of artillery in England. Wolseley had other reasons for urging this move: armed with the professional's contempt for the amateur, he believed

1. Cab 37/51/105. "Troops to Meet Possible French Attack." 29 December 1899.
p.1. The paragraphs are inverted from the original text by Wolseley.

the Auxiliary Forces in the home defence army would need artillery in any war against the first-line troops of an invader, for the defending formations knew of their inferiority against Continental professional troops, and would therefore enter the campaign for the defence of the island already half-beaten. He warned darkly that unless three Army Corps were made available for home defence, that "the protection of these islands will depend solely and entirely on the fleet."¹

The British defeats of 'Black Week' greatly increased public apprehension over invasion. The Times first leader of the new year 1900 congratulated the British public on having

learnt that the old idea - much cherished and zealously propagated in Pall Mall - that we must look to the army for immunity from invasion, is an exploded superstition. The protection of our shores is not the business of the Army. It is the business of the Navy, the only force we possess able to perform it.²

The Times congratulations were perhaps a little premature, for other journals of influence were slightly more alloyed in their allegiance to the strategic ideology of the new naval historicism. The weekly Observer, at this time both Unionist and Imperialist in tone, The Pall Mall Gazette, of Liberal Imperialist persuasion, and the arch-Tory Morning Post - all had a somewhat more ambiguous position in relation to the strategic possibility of invasion. The Morning Post's policy was compromised by the enthusiasm of its proprietor, Lord Glenesk, for the Volunteers, which was shared by its Military Correspondent, Spencer Wilkinson. In his leading articles, Wilkinson preached that sophisticated form of Blue Waterism which held that a small raiding force might slip past the Navy, and found in this a

1. Cab. 37/51/105 "Troops to Meet Possible French Attack." 29 December 1899. p.1.

2. Times. 1 January 1900. p.9.

justification for the three Army Corps which remained in England. But Wilkinson stressed that the nation must look to the Navy for its main defence against invasion throughout 1900. But in the long run, steps should be taken to give the Volunteers a larger share in home defence: what was required was a great organising genius like Carnot or Scharnhorst who could, in three months, train and prepare the Volunteers to the point they could enter the field against Continental regular troops with some hope of success. Wilkinson pleaded that if the Volunteers were not scientific soldiers equal to professionals, the fault was not theirs, but rather that of a Government that refused to use their talents.¹ They were the best raw material for a home defence field force, yet the War Office had refused to act on the official scheme of defence which was based on the Volunteers: the Defence of London plan, with its trenches dug around the capital. Wilkinson complained "Their positions are not ready, most of the works required are not built, the guns are not there. The Volunteers destined for the positions have never seen them." He went on to urge that the scheme be completed so that the Volunteer brigades might be in their trenches by May 1st.²

The Observer, for its part, did much to dispel the bogey of invasion during the early part of 1900, when national insecurity was at its height. Successive leaders emphasized that no single power could do the Empire any injury, and that the interests of the European powers were too contradictory to permit a coalition against England. The latest figures of British

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1. Morning Post, 13 February 1900, p. 6; 14 February 1900, p.4; 16 February 1900, p.4. For Lord Glenesk's views on home defence, see his Speech to the Primrose League, quoted in Morning Post, 9 May 1900, p.3.
 2. Wilkinson MSS. OTP 13/48. Letter to Editor, 1 March 1900.

naval strength, the paper pointed out on January 7th, were hardly comforting to the prospect of an allied enterprise against England: even a doubling of the German Navy would not upset the balance of naval power. That Germany should join France to attack England was merely "one of those phantasms which are generated by absinthe on the Paris boulevard."¹ However, as the year progressed, the Observer singled out Germany as the greatest single enemy of England,² and became less optimistic over the European situation, warning on February 11th

We cannot afford to present to Europe the spectacle of an island demuded of troops ... a French invasion exists only in the distorted imagination of MR. STEAD. But we cannot trust to the forbearance of rivals ...³

As the crisis deepened, the Observer increasingly emphasized the importance of home defence. Later in 1900, it urged that all party politics cease in regard to home defence, and demanded greater direction and leadership from the Government in making Britain strong against her foes.⁴

The Nineteenth Century demonstrated its traditional interest in home defence throughout the crisis for its editor, James Knowles, had been one of the leaders of earlier campaigns against the Channel Tunnel on the grounds that it would encourage invasion projects by France. Issues of the Nineteenth Century were filled with articles on army reform, the defence

1. The Observer. 7 January 1900, p. 4; 4 February 1900. p.4.

2. "Our Real Enemy?" Ibid. 1 April 1900. p. 4.

3. "A Bad Spirit." Ibid. 11 February 1900. p. 4.

4. "Plea against Party Government." Ibid. 5 August 1900. p. 4.

"Lord Salisbury on National Defence." Ibid. 11 November 1900, p.4.

of London, and other pertinent topics. In January, Knowles took the unusual course of writing an editorial for the journal to urge that the Militia Ballot be enacted, which would render every male Briton subject to military service for defence of the home island, and give the nation a drilled and armed force against invasion.¹ At the same time, Leo Marx, editor of the National Review, warned that during 1900

Great Britain will be stripped of all her effective soldiers, and will be practically devoid of guns. What wonder if she is regarded as a tempting prize by German and French strategists, who, not being disciples of Mahan, are convinced that with reasonable luck Great Britain can be invaded.²

The most persistent of the invasion publicists was the sensational journalist W.T. Stead, a Liberal Pacifist who had originally opposed the Boer War as "the lure which disgarrisoned England" and left it defenceless in the midst of a hostile Europe: a point of view put forward by Campbell-Bannerman, the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, if with less colourful phraseology. Stead sermonised in his periodical, War Against War, that even the Evil One himself "could not have more unerringly encompassed the ruin of England.

Could the author of all evil plan a scheme more effective? France, all the while watching with feverish impatience the completion of the disarmament of Albion, would count 100,000 men a small sacrifice for the immense revenge which enabled her even for a single day to hold London at her mercy. The surrender à la Jameson of the whole army of the Raiders would be as nothing compared with the gain of the destruction of our only arsenal and the loot of London ... passionate determination to hoist the Union Jack over Pretoria may result in our seeing next year the Tricolour flying - temporarily at least - over the Palace at Westminster.³

1. Nineteenth Century. January 1900. pp. 1-2.

2. "Episodes of the Month." National Review. January 1900. p. 650.

3. W.T. Stead. "Our Great National Peril. The Opened Door for a French Raid on London." War Against War. 22 December 1899. p. 148.

Stead's outspoken, and occasionally incoherent warnings of invasion expressed the anxieties of the period in their most extreme form, and continued throughout the year. In his more widely circulated monthly, The Review of Reviews, Stead spun out numerous variations upon the theme that "The Empire, stripped of its armour, has its hands tied behind its back and its bare throat exposed to the keen knife of its bitterest enemies." First he foresaw 50,000 French troops, reinforced with quick-firing guns, making a predatory swoop on London, and massacring its defenders, who had no artillery. Woolwich, the nation's only arsenal, would be captured and England would be helpless. Stead printed an elaborate map showing how the deed might be done, showing French troop concentrations, their possible path to French ports, across the Channel, and to London. A reporter, sent by Stead to estimate the tonnage in the various French ports had calculated that almost 120,000 tons of steam shipping lay available for the adventure.¹

Stead warned that France had assurance of German support for such a project for the first time. Germany was now intent on launching a Navy against England and also had invasion plans ready. Field-Marshal von Moltke had said that the occupation of London would be child's play. (Stead neglected to finish the quote: von Moltke had gone on to say that troops once landed in England could not be got out again.) Field-Marshal von Wrangel, he claimed, had outlined a plan by which all German waiters in London, each with a stout stick and revolver, would be ordered down to Woolwich, arriving after dark. At the stroke of midnight, the British Minister in Berlin would be served with a declaration of war, and five minutes later, these disguised German soldiers would break into the arsenal

1. Review of Reviews, February 1900. p. 124.

and overpower the guards. Within half an hour, the entire fort would be ablaze and England's only stockpile of ammunition and military supplies gone forever. Stead continued his crusade, arguing that England stood helpless before any attacker: her arsenals were empty, her armies gone, and her secondary forces, the Yeomanry and Volunteers, reduced to the point of collapse. Armament matters were even worse: owing to the shell famine, no cartridges were available for the home army, whose stores had been looted to supply "the predatory schemes of an aggressive jingoism" in South Africa. It was folly to talk of resistance on the barricades, for the French could ascend the Thames, shell the city, or cut off its water supply. Quick-firing guns, entrenching tools, and barbed wire were required at once, Stead declared at the beginning of February: in another month it might be too late.

The peril assumed various shapes as the months passed. In April Stead found that the general belief in Paris was that war would break out by Christmas.² In May, Stead forewarned that if Chamberlain became Prime Minister, he would pick a quarrel with France. The French would contrive to lure the Channel Fleet to Morocco, and 60,000 French would land. Just across the Channel, three million troops, to whom war was a profession, awaited their chance. To counteract his fabricated menaces, Stead pressed for the usual remedies of the home defence enthusiast: more home defence cyclists, experimental mobilisations and manoeuvres, and more rifle ranges. As the most persistent and prolific

1. "England's Peril." Review of Reviews. pp. 126-27.

2. Ibid. April 1900. pp. 315-16.

3. Ibid. May 1900. pp. 541-42.

of the invasion "scaremongers", Stead was nonetheless something of an anomaly. Concern over home defence was usually the reserve of Conservatives who had close ties with the army. Stead, as a Pacifist and Liberal, stands out in such a context, and his intervention in the controversy shows the extent to which the Boer War strained British military resources and aroused anxieties in the general public. The home defence crisis brought about strange alliances: Stead's views became disseminated to an even broader audience through the Daily Mail, usually at the opposite end of the political spectrum.¹

In the more traditional mould were John Strachey, editor and proprietor of The Spectator, the most widely-read weekly review in England, Strachey's friend Leo Maxse, the vigorous editor of the National Review, and James Knowles of The Nineteenth Century. Maxse introduced invasion frequently into the rambling commentary which began each issue of the National Review and even made direct frontal attacks on the Blue Water position.

A large, but fortunately declining, number of Englishmen refuse to consider the undefended state of this island, on the ground (1) that the strength of the British Navy removes all question of danger of invasion out of the range of practical politics; or, in the alternative, (2) that if our Navy is not strong enough to command the sea and preserve us from invasion, we must sit down like fatalists and accept a foreign yoke. This absolutist view of the "blue water school" is attractive, but is it as sound as it is simple?²

Similar intuitions moved Strachey. The Spectator, in the weeks following 'Black Week' had demanded the immediate mobilization of the Fleet, the formation of a Territorial Army, the organization of Volunteer

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1. Stead's articles in the Daily Mail appear significantly first as interviews and then as signed articles. See the Daily Mail: "Is France Planning War?" 20 April 1900, p.4; 30 April 1900, p.3.
 2. National Review. September 1900, p. 13.

veterans into a Reserve, and had asked for the £3,000,000 to £4,000,000 necessary to put these measures into effect. In an Imperial and militaristic age, it was necessary to set the home defences in order and in 1900, England seemed to Strachey, Maxse, and others to be attempting the construction of an Empire while her homeland lay undefended. Strachey warned after 'Black Week' that if Britain met with another sensational reverse in South Africa, there would be almost irresistible pressure applied upon the governments of France and Russia to attack. The Spectator wished

to see this country put in such a posture of defence that it shall not be possible for even the wildest Chauvinist dreamer on the Continent to contemplate the notion of invasion without feeling the thing to be utterly impossible and absurd.¹

The same issue carried a letter from Lord Wemyss, one of the chief home defence spokesmen in the Lords, who had undertaken to organize a Volunteer Reserve, who also had it from high authority that England should prepare so that "no foreign power would dream of setting a hostile foot upon our shores."² Strachey was personally concerned over invasion, and, according to his wife, "threw himself heart and soul into the movement for Village Rifle Clubs."³ In the course of the next year he organized a personal guerilla force which would go into action in the event of invasion, and inspired his friend Arthur Conan Doyle to organize a similar Commando of about 80 men.⁴ Doyle went on to write a book on home defence tactics, which shall be examined later. Together, Stead, Knowles,

1. "The Military Preparations." Spectator. 23 December 1899, p.945.

2. Ibid. p. 952. The phrasing and description of the source suggest Wolseley.

3. Amy Strachey. St. Loe Strachey: His Life and His Paper. Gollancz, London, 1930, p. 129.

4. Strachey MSS. A. Conan Doyle to Strachey, n.d. but just before Easter 1900. See also further correspondence, 1900-01.

Maxse, and Strachey with their journals and their readership, represented a powerful body of opinion that a Unionist government could ill afford to offend.

As far as the Cabinet was concerned, matters could hardly be worse. The war was going badly, they were open to criticism of negligence of the national defences, and their professional advisors echoed the jeremiads of the Conservative press. Ardagh, as D.M.I. had warned his superiors during January that the machinery of Home Defence ^{was} breaking down.

The cardinal and indispensable condition upon which alone the machinery will work in war, is - that whenever a unit of the home defence establishment is sent out of the United Kingdom, another similar unit shall forthwith be raised to replace it.

This was not being done: not only were Regular units being supplanted by Auxiliary units for the defence of England, but the best elements of the second-line troops were also being sent out of the country. Ardagh reiterated the warnings of the "alarmists": not only was the Home Defence Force seriously weakened and disorganized, the island was "denuded to a dangerous degree of her natural military protection."¹

Ardagh's paper only served to reinforce the arguments of his chief, Wolseley, at a meeting of the Defence Committee on January 20, 1900.

The Commander-in-Chief advised the Cabinet that France would use at least 150,000 troops if she mounted an invasion operation, in an effort to subdue the entire country. A smaller force would be too dangerous and would imperil the success of the enterprise. Wolseley pointed out that at least three Army Corps, or 90,000 Regulars, in addition to the Volunteer Force, had traditionally been deemed necessary to defend London. Britain no longer even had this number of troops available, even though the will and strength of France had increased enormously since

1. PRO 30/40/13 Ardagh MSS. "Organization for War. Memo by D.M.I." Jan., 1900

1888, when this policy had been instituted. No circumstances warranted having fewer troops available than was thought necessary then.¹

Similar concern was expressed from the heights of the throne itself. The Queen wrote to Salisbury on January 27th expressing her surprise that "the very serious state of the War was not considered by the Cabinet yesterday. The feeling abroad except in America and Italy is so hostile that we ought to take further steps to protect the country,"² Salisbury immediately telegraphed in reply that "Your Majesty's wishes as to the defence of this country have been conveyed to the War Minister. Every effort is being made to raise troops here."³ The Queen, like Salisbury, could remember the great invasion scares of the middle of the century, and her Address from the Throne on January 30th mentioned home defence in a tactful allusion to the recent German Navy Bill. The Commons were reminded

At a time when other nations are perfecting their naval preparations at the cost of increasing efforts and sacrifices, the solicitude with which you have provided for the efficiency of our Navy and of our coast defences will assuredly not be relaxed.⁴

It was the old Queen's last message to the House. She died within a year, her passing sped by anxieties over the security of the country.

Almost as soon as the debate began, the Under Secretary of State for War was asked how many Regular troops remained in England. The

1. Cab 37/52/5 "Meeting of the Defence Committee." 20 January 1900.

2. Salisbury MSS. A83/142 Queen to Salisbury, 27 January 1900.

3. Ibid. A84/169 Salisbury to Queen. 27 January 1900.

4. Hansard. 30 January 1900. col. 4.

question was not answered directly, but the information was forthcoming.¹ At a subsequent Cabinet meeting, home defence was discussed in a long session which lasted two days. Lansdowne revealed that less than a Corps of Regulars remained in the country, and asked that the Auxiliary formations be provided with the necessary supply, transport, and artillery that would enable them to act as the island's first line of defence while the Regulars were away. To this the Cabinet readily agreed, apparently not in full awareness that these supplies were also in demand by the army in South Africa. Another proposal by Lansdowne, on Wolseley's advice, that ex-soldiers aged 25 to 45 should be invited by Royal Proclamation to re-enter the service for a year for home defence, was rejected. Salisbury informed the Queen that "it was felt that the offer of so large a price (£30 per man) for the service of the veterans would be taken as a cry of despair and would create a considerable panic, besides encouraging foreign powers to speculate on our supposed exhaustion." Other measures were enacted: the Auxiliary cavalry were to spend a month in the field and it was suggested that some means be found for speeding the mobilization of the Volunteers.² But no broad and comprehensive plan was suggested; only improvisations of the existing system.

When the Government announced the Army Estimates for the coming year on February 12, 1900, it accredited the anxieties voiced in the War Office and broadcast by the "scaremongers." Mr. Wyndham, Under-Secretary of State for War, admitted that virtually all the Regular troops

1. Hansard, 1 February 1900. col. 276.

2. Cab 37752/14 "Army Proposals (Security against Invasion.)" by Lansdowne, 8 February 1900, p.3.
Cab 41/25/30 Salisbury to Queen. 9 February 1900.
Cab 41/25/31 Salisbury to Queen. 10 February 1900.

had left the country and that the defence of the realm rested with the Auxiliary Forces. But, it was explained, the Army represented only one-half of the defence against invasion, and the Fleet still remained. Yet if the Fleet were away from British shores, the country must contemplate the possibility of raids, and the risk of invasion was perceptibly greater than it had been a year before "in exact proportion to the reduction of our military home defences,"¹ Wyndham then appealed for Volunteers to come forward in their hundreds of thousands.

... we should be very much happier if we had 120,000 men or more as an additional guarantee against small raids, moveable columns to prevent raids of the smallest character and to prevent small expeditions from landing and interfering with our naval signal stations.²

Statements such as these naturally angered the Blue Water contingent in the House of Commons. Dilke was the first on his feet after the speech, complaining that there had been far too much emphasis in the official policy about fixed defences, the home army, and invasion. The Government, he charged, gave "support to the heresy that this country could, in regard to invasion, or home defence, rely on something other than its Fleet."³ What was needed was a more mobile force for overseas service; not 600,000 men in home defence. Dilke's remarks were supported by Mr. Gibson Bowles, another Blue Water advocate. Other speakers, however, welcomed a home army which would provide security if the Navy were beaten or recuperating.⁴ Wyndham replied the next day, lamenting that the Government was hardly allowed to plan armies for home defence

1. Hansard. 12 February 1900. col. 1259.

2. Ibid. col. 1265.

3. Ibid. col. 1282.

4. Ibid. Mr. Acland Hood, col. 1301; Mr. Channing, col. 1290-91.

"without being accused of forgetting the existence and importance of the Fleet." His remarks subsequently reveal that the home army was designed as much as a political expedient as a military force: "I do not look upon this as a defence against attack. I regard it as an insurance against the fear which might spring up from a threat." Without it, Wyndham stated, a panic might arise which might turn out a strong government or force the hand of a weak one.¹

In the ensuing debate, Captain Norton expressed his faith in sea-power: he believed that if British harbours were mined, and all quick-firing guns put into action in coastal forts, while the Channel Fleet was given proper strategical dispositions and was prevented from leaving its stations, the bogey of invasion would cease. The Government should calculate how many transports would be required to bring an army over from Calais or Dunkirk: it would require at least a hundred large vessels to transport 100,000 or 150,000 troops, Sir E.T. Gouley estimated. Campbell Bannermann, rose to point out that any six sailors would disagree with any six soldiers over the size of the force that could be landed in this country. The proper method would be to take the largest estimate of a landing force, and then to ask the soldiers how many were required to subdue the intruders.³ In the House of Lords, Rosebery stated that a force of 409,000 men, as suggested, was still a weak force qualitatively.⁴

1. Hansard. 13 February 1900. col. 1400.

2. Ibid. col. 1431.

3. Ibid. 16 February 1900. col. 245.

4. Ibid. (Lords) 15 February 1900. col. 28.

Balfour, First Lord of the Treasury, and future prime mover behind the first official attempts to deal with the problem of invasion analytically, replied to Campbell-Bannerman. Twelve soldiers and sailors might storm at one another for a time, he retorted, but it was possible that they might agree eventually. A calculation had been made regarding defence against invasion, but not in this way: in 1888 it had been decided that three Army Corps of Regulars should be kept in the home island. Balfour overlooked the fact that this standard had by now been completely depleted. In response to an interruption from Colomb, Balfour added that nothing had happened since 1888 to make this policy inadequate.¹ But this incident must have registered in Balfour's mind, for it anticipates many features of his later examination of the problem as Prime Minister.

Press reaction to the government proposals reflected the general sentiment that not enough had been done. The Spectator pressed for additional measures: the immediate formation of an independent cavalry, organized transport, and artillery units for the Volunteer Force, as well as the setting up of a Volunteer Reserve.² But Blue Water denizens were infuriated that the Government give serious thought and expend funds on such a contentious and remote possibility. Sir John Colomb gave a long speech in the Commons on the folly of building up an army that "would lie down like cows" behind fortifications, saying

My own impression is that there is an infinite waste of

1. Hansard (Commons) 16 February 1900. cols. 250-51.

2. "The Military Proposals." Spectator. 17 February 1900. p. 228.

the Resources of the State being spent on a supposed condition of things which in war can have no real existence.¹

The Government, heedless of Colomb, agreed at a Cabinet meeting to spend up to £300,000 to improve the Militia and the Volunteers. There was also a great deal of discussion over the value of rifle ranges, but the Cabinet could not come to agreement on the details of a plan.² The grant was announced in Parliament on March 12th, only to draw further censorious protests from Colomb, who charged that the Government were "taking advantage of a war fever to pile up the permanent expenses for local military defence of the country."

I protest very humbly against the principle upon which we go year after year, of building up a military policy while ignoring the influence of sea power, which can and must rule your military policy.³

The appeal of the Blue Water School with its appeals to economy and against large standing armies was well calculated to appeal to Liberal sentiments, and Campbell-Bannerman himself seconded Colomb's protests on this occasion.

Interest in the question would have been all the more pronounced had it been generally known that only a single battalion of Regulars now remained in the country and that stocks of modern artillery were almost completely exhausted. March 1900 subsequently became the reference point for all military reform, and would be cited as the occasion on which British power of resistance against invasion had reached its lowest point. Even in the event, symptoms of a more general insecurity

1. Hansard (Commons) 19 February 1900. col. 433. See also cols, 420, 430, 434.

2. Cab 41/25/33 Salisbury to Queen. 25 February 1900.

3. Hansard (Commons) 12 March 1900, col. 664.

appeared in the public press. The St. James Gazette launched a series of alarmist articles in favour of a larger Navy. These proclaimed that "Britain's Coming Peril" would take a very real form that next August. When the Paris Exposition of 1900 would close, the French planned to mobilize four Army Corps - double the usual number - far from the German border, and close to Calais. Simultaneously, another large concentration was scheduled in Algeria, for the alleged purpose of luring the Channel Fleet to the Mediterranean. The St. James Gazette intimated that all these events might conspire to tempt the French into a military adventure which would unify a nation now wracked by the divisions of the Dreyfus affair. It warned

At the moment that the gates of the Exhibition are being closed something like 200,000 foreign soldiers will be massed, and the greater number within a few hours' train journey of the nearest French ports to England.¹

This rapidly-forming threat, it advised, could be met by the Navy alone, not by the amateurish inefficiency of Auxiliary formations. Even a few thousand French troops, the paper asserted, would prevail over "charges of fox-hunters with their crops, or by farmers with fowling-pieces."² Only a hundredth part of home defence concerned the War Office; if the Fleet was under strength, every penny spent otherwise was a wicked and idiotic waste. Letters to the editor pointed out how the War Office scheme of trenches on the Surrey Downs would provide nothing but piles of white chalk as a perfect range register for skilled French artillery officers. Trenches, anyway, had been repeatedly flanked in South

1. "Our Coming Peril. The French Plan of Campaign." St. James Gazette. 12 March 1900, p.5.

2. "Home Defence." Ibid. 13 March 1900. p.3

Africa and would be so again.¹

Similar alarms were broadcast by a Volunteer officer in the Nineteenth Century, but on behalf of the Auxiliary Forces; was not all Europe an immense parade ground? No European power was beneath suspicion: the Germans were held in check by a solid stratum of common sense, but the French must really be watched, as they were "like hounds in their love of the hunt." Owing to wicked party politicians, all that remained in England to stop the disciplined hordes of France were 215,000 Volunteers, and the utterly illusory proposals of the Government to furnish these amateurs with equipment had caused indignation and surprise throughout the nation. The French War Office, it was warned, had long ago worked out plans for a descent on a defenceless London and the rabid Anglophobia of Paris might at any time bring an attack on England.² Sentiments such as these were not isolated. It was reported in the Times that the Earl of Wemyss was organizing local hunt clubs into home defence cavalry squadrons.³ Leo Maxse, in the leading article of the National Review claimed that the French General Staff were convinced that they could land fifty thousand men in England. He demanded:

How many trained men, how many good shots, how much ammunition, how many guns, how many gunners, will there be in this island at any given moment while the Boer War lasts? The foreign military attaches in London are reputed to have reported to their respective Governments that England is today practically an undefended country. Unfortunately the British House of Commons cares for none of these things ...⁴

1. St. James Gazette. 16 March 1900. p.3.

2. W.S.Lilly. "The Parious Position of England." Nineteenth Century. April 1900. pp. 580-592.

3. Times. 13 April 1900. p.4; 24 April 1900. p.4.

4. "Episodes of the Month." National Review. April 1900. p. 196.

The Daily Mail published an interview with W.T. Stead, who had visions of 80,000 of the enemy sweeping through England with 400 guns, opposed only by a few "barracks full of boys."¹

News from France contained little consolation for worried Englishmen. The Morning Post reported from Paris that the latest issue of Le Monde Illustré, a popular monthly, had devoted an entire issue to an illustrated prophesy of the conquest of England by Franco-Russian forces. This depicted a French army landing at Brighton while the allied Fleets hold the Channel. General Marchand, the hero of Fashoda, would be killed at a great French victory at Lewes while Marshall Jamont would enter London to dictate the dismemberment of the British Empire to Rosebery and Campbell-Bannerman. The Morning Post correspondent reported that avid crowds had seized issues of the magazine, which was reprinted and then was sold out. This was evidently a theme which appealed to the Parisian public.² Captain Houette of the French Navy was quoted in Public Opinion as saying

At the present moment, between Havre and Dunkirk, we have enough fishing-vessels and tugs to put 90,000 men across, given 16 hours free from molestation, with artillery, baggage, munitions, and four days' provisions. Who can say that these sixteen hours will never be found, even at a sacrifice of our whole fleet? I need not make any eulogy of the personnel of the Navy. Give us numerous and powerful vessels, and I assure you we will write some glorious pages in the history of France.³

The concern of the public was reflected in the letters column of

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1. "Is France Planning War?" Daily Mail. 20 April 1900. p.4; See also 30 April, p.3.
 2. Morning Post. 13 March 1900. p.7.
"The End of England." Public Opinion. 16 March 1900. p. 328.
"La Guerre Anglo-Franco-Russe." Le Monde Illustré. March 1900.
 3. "How to Attack England." Public Opinion. 6 April 1900. p. 427.

the St. James Gazette, in which various notables suggested means of meeting invasion. One letter writer suggested that the Lord Mayor of London take up the question of fortifying the city and demanded that provision be made for the defence of every road leading into London and for the conversion of every house into a fortress. Another found sinister implications in the "fact" that "for some time past a large number of French cyclists have been touring in certain districts in Kent and Sussex" - the presumed scene of a French advance on London. Another letter complained that there were over 100,000 French and German men living in London who would commit prodigious acts of sabotage in preparation for an attack, and who might be joined by a mob intent on plunder. This latter threat, it was suggested, might be met by a London Home Guard which would reinforce the Volunteers.¹ Another letter-writer advocated the conversion of firemen into mobile artillerymen. Quick-firing guns could be mounted on their fire-fighting vehicles, and the firemen's discipline and galloping drills would enable the city defence headquarters to call out these mobile pom-pom units with the rapidity of fire trucks.²

The St. James Gazette also published a long article by the military writer F.N. Maude, which enlarged on the ease with which London might be captured. The French, he said, required only 36 hours' command of the Channel and three days marching to arrive in London.

Maude claimed that even a successfully thwarted attack would mean ruin

1. "Our Coming Peril." St. James Gazette. 24 March 1900. pp. 4-5.

2. R.G. Graham. "Home Defence." Ibid. 2 April 1900. p.16.

for all classes and warned that the French always had enough transport and ships to bring over 200,000 men. Any local resistance at the beach could be crushed by 800 lb. French naval shells; then the French could lower their horses over-board and manhandle their guns ashore as the English had done at the Crimea. A simultaneous rush on Plymouth, the Thames, and Portsmouth, at three in the morning, would block the Fleet and immobilize the British defences. Maude argued that only three million men, permanently entrenched on the shore, would suffice to counteract the French peril.¹

Maude was so captivated by the vision of French troops in London that he later in the year wrote a detailed scenario of a possible future attack. True to the warnings of the St. James Gazette, the French land 115,000 troops in England on August 12, 1900, after surprising the British fleet with torpedo boats. The invaders shell London from Shooter's Hill, while the Chasseurs succeed in dashing into a London suburb before they are stopped by fog and street-fighters. Londoners face the threat phlegmatically. While the bullion is removed from the Bank of England and refugees from Sussex pour into the city, the populace remains calm, even as surface traffic comes to a halt and business life is suspended under the French bombardment. Finally the Fleet assembles in the Channel and cut the invaders off from their homeland. The "instability of the mercurial Gallic temperament" asserts itself, and starving French surrender themselves after only five days of fighting.

1. F.N. Maude. "Our Coming Peril." Ibid. 20 March 1900. p.4.

A captured French officer explains to a British friend that the unexpected difficulties of street-fighting in the winding and fog-ridden streets of London helped to foredoom the adventure.¹ The reaction of the general public to this story is not known, but George Bernard Shaw remarked that "Only a professional soldier could be so ignorant of warfare."²

Another variation on this theme, inspired by a Teutophobe article in The Observer, featured a German occupation of London. In this forecast of treacherous attack, which was designed to foster rifle clubs, German clerks in London prepare the way in advance by buying up cattle and provender, chartering shipping, and stealing the Admiralty cipher. When the Germans declare war in March 1900, forged messages send the British Fleet in pursuit of phantoms, while the Germans take possession of the Thames without a shot. A German Army Corps, already in the city in disguise, is mobilized, and the main force takes London only twelve hours after the declaration of war with a great show of force, featuring "devilish-looking little Maxims posed suggestively at the street corners." England is let off easily this time, owing to the Germans "bloodless and brilliant victory," and escapes by paying only a £10,000,000 indemnity.³

The Government were not immune to the anxieties manifested in these stories, and were busy trying to accelerate the mobilization of the

1. F.N. Maude. The New Battle of Dorking. London, 1900.

2. I.F. Clarke. Voices Propheying War. O.U.P., 1966 p. 137n.

3. T.W. Offin, Jr. How The Germans Took London: Forewarned, Forearmed. Edmund Durrant, Chelmsford, 1900.

Auxiliary troops in the event of invasion. Ardagh argued against any change at this critical time, saying that to mobilize troops in a time of tension might actually heighten the crisis.¹ The Government did, however introduce certain other measures in May: the Military Manoeuvres Bill and Military Lands Bill which were designed to improve home defence tactics through the provision of large practice areas for war games, and the construction of additional armories, rifle ranges, and drill halls for the Volunteer Force.² But these measures were merely piecemeal and provisional, and the deeper questions implied in invasion remained unexamined.

On May 9, Salisbury himself intervened in the invasion controversy in a speech to the Primrose League. In introducing the Prime Minister, Lord Glenesk, proprietor of the Morning Post, assured his audience, in words reminiscent of the 1888 scare, that according to "the highest authority in England", (almost certainly Wolseley)

At this moment, the French, with a little luck, could land from 50,000 to 75,000 men completely equipped on our shores. It only needs the Channel to be free for a certain number of hours to make this an accomplished fact.³

This threat could only be met by "making each Englishman a self-contained warrior."

When every Englishman knew how to use his horse, his bicycle, his motor-car, and his rifle for home defence, Continental nations would no longer study in their military colleges the mode of invading England, and

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1. Ardagh MSS. PRO 30/40/13 Memo by Ardagh of 2 April 1900.
 2. Cab 37/52/46 "Military Manoeuvres Amendment Bill." 8 May 1900.
Cab 37/52/45 "Military Lands Bill." 3-8 May 1900.
 3. "The Primrose League." The Morning Post. 9 May 1900, p.3.

we should be safe from all dangers. (Cheers)¹

The stage was now set for the Prime Minister to declare himself on the invasion question, and his remarks soon revealed that he also took the possibility of overseas attack seriously. In the course of his speech, Salisbury specified

... we can have no security except in the efficacy of our own defence and the strength of our own right arm. Everywhere you see the powers of offence increasing—armies become larger, navies are founded, railways, telegraphs, all the apparatus which science has placed at the disposal of war becomes more perfect and more effective; and all these things may, by one of those strange currents which sweep across the ocean of international politics, be united in one great wave to dash upon our shores.²

Salisbury went on to warn that a blow to the heart of England would mean an end to her history. Therefore the nation must have enough men to make any enemy enterprise absolutely hopeless and every grown male must know how to defend his home. As conscription was impossible, Salisbury urged that a net-work of village rifle clubs be established, where every man could practice shooting within close range of his home. This movement must begin voluntarily in the parishes, for it was "the duty of every Englishman to make himself competent to meet the invading enemy." Defence was not solely the business of the War Office, but of the people themselves.

Whether or not it was due to his hyper-patriotic and military-minded Primrose League audience, the Prime Minister had ranged himself squarely among the ranks of the "scaremongers", and this gave new impetus to anxieties over invasion. The Times, commenting on this unwelcome

1. "The Government of the Empire." Times. 10 May 1900. p.4.

2. Times. 10 May 1900. p.4.

development noted in its leading article that Salisbury had begun by stigmatising ideas such as these as "gloomy and alarmist": now he was pressing them on the country. Did the Prime Minister, asked the Times, realize what would really happen if the Royal Navy were destroyed?¹ A long letter was published from Colonel Lonsdale Hale which stated that Salisbury's "appalling opinion" was an appeal to military ignorance and a red herring to divert attention from the efforts of the War Office.² Lord Wemyss wrote to Public Opinion accusing the Prime Minister of falling "a victim to the prevailing rifle hysteria" and predicted that in case of invasion, rifle club members would be hanged, rifle in hand. Wemyss charged that this speech had been merely an artful dodge to avoid the unpopular step of implementing the Militia Ballot, which would make all British males liable for service in home defence,³ which he had been campaigning against for some months.

In that section of the Press which had been announcing the dangers of invasion, however, Salisbury's speech was roundly applauded. Maxse in the National Review exulted that the Prime Minister had seen the light at last, and sardonically congratulated the "scaremongers" on having gained such a distinguished convert. He called for the creation of a genuine home army under the Duke of Connaught which would stay in the field until 50,000 veterans were returned from the Cape. Britain could never trust the Czar or the "rash mercurial Kaiser", and the French military party might launch a coup d'état.⁴

1. Times. 10 May 1900. p. 11.

2. Ibid. 2 June 1900. p.14. See also "Lord Salisbury on Invasion." St. James Gazette. 1 August 1900. p. 15.

3. "National Defence." Public Opinion. 18 May 1900. p. 616.

4. National Review. June 1900. p. 532. See also pp. 525-533.

The Daily Mail was caught at an embarrassing moment, for the paper was in the midst of an attempt to engineer a Navy Scare. The Mail reacted with characteristic navalist zeal, and attempted to re-channel Salisbury's enthusiasm for village rifle clubs into an appeal for a larger Fleet. Its editorial of May 10th stated that invasion loomed so ominously only because there was grave doubt regarding the equipment of British warships. The only proper answer was to increase the Navy. The next day, the Mail published a column-long article by W.T. Stead, the general tenor of which is conveyed by its title: "I Told You So." Stead's remedy was to have the Defence of London's fortifications completed.¹

The Spectator, which had anticipated Salisbury's proposals, asked the Government to encourage the rifle club movement by providing range instructors and guardians for local installations. Rifles should be provided to various clubs and ammunition provided free for those who achieved proficiency in marksmanship.² Similarly, the Volunteer lobby in Parliament was greatly encouraged. Major Rasch asked the Government embarrassing questions about the details of the Volunteer mobilization scheme and demanded a progress report on the Defence of London scheme. The official spokesman had nothing to offer, and refused to reveal the present state of the London fortifications, presumably on the grounds of national security.³

The War Office remained anxious during the summer of 1900. The Director of Military Intelligence prepared a memorandum which substanti-

1. "Lord Salisbury's Warning". Daily Mail. 10 May 1900. p.4; "I Told You So." Loc.cit.

2. Spectator. 12 May 1900. p. 656.

3. Hansard. 14 May 1900, cols. 27-28; 19 June 1900, col. 437.

ated Wolseley's claim that French facilities for invasion had increased since 1888. The time element had decreased, and it could now be expected that the French could launch a surprise attack with greater facility than ever before. Ardagh called the attention of his superiors to the fact that "within the last two years there have been three French projects for invasion - They may be speculative, but they indicate the trend of opinion in France."¹ It is interesting that the War Office did not even consider the possibility of German invasion, which the Director of Naval Intelligence had focussed upon two years before as the most likely future form of enemy attack.²

On July 28th, the invasion controversy provoked a fiery interchange between Wemyss and Salisbury in the House of Lords. Citing the Primrose League speech, Wemyss asked Salisbury whether he had carefully inquired into the means and organisation of the national defence. He produced a document from a naval attaché, whom he refused to identify, which he said suggested great national danger in November next. Salisbury replied that the only peculiarity he anticipated in November, 1900 was "a great collection of shooting stars .." and went on to virtually contradict the impression conveyed by his Primrose League speech. He emphasized that all foreign powers were correct in their relations with Great Britain and expressed his confidence in British home defence in no uncertain terms.

1. Ardagh MSS. PRO 30/40/14 "A French Invasion. DMI's Opinion on General Brackenbury's Paper (1888)." 11 July 1900.
2. Adm 1/7387A "As to Appointment of a Military Attaché to the German Embassy in London." 21 May - 5 June 1898. Published in Marder. BNP. pp. 298-99.

I do not admit the possibility of successful invasion on the part of any hostile Power. If the noble Earl can prove it, can show it, and give us ground for believing it, let him do so; but if he cannot do so, I do not think he serves his country by the constant repetition of impossible apprehensions and unfounded complaints.¹

Rosebery, in the ensuing debate, corrected the Prime Minister. He declared that Britain's foreign relations were far from being normal and friendly; rather "we were surrounded with an atmosphere of hatred unprecedented, I hope, in the history of this country." Rosebery preferred a sentence of assurance from Wolseley than a thousand speeches to the Primrose League. Rosebery was now being very sharp indeed, for the memory of the Salisbury-Wolseley confrontation in the House of Lords twelve years before was still a very living memory, and it was notorious in the drawing rooms of London that Wolseley was deeply anxious over a French invasion, and would doubtless expound upon the subject, ^{if} allowed to do so. The Government rose to Rosebery's challenge. Lansdowne, Secretary of State for War, protested that such a course was unconstitutional, and would allow professional advisors to usurp the position of civilian ministers. Salisbury and the Earl of Kimberley baited the Liberal opposition: if they were dissatisfied with the national defences, they owed it to the country to suggest their own remedies.²

The Times welcomed this debate, and observed that the public were not so intent upon invasion as the nervous Lord Wemyss, who seemed intent on keeping the danger alive. The Times, nonetheless, advised the Govern-

1. Hansard. 27 July 1900. col. 1468.

2. Ibid.

ment to take all necessary steps on land and sea, in view of the diplomatic situation.¹ The leading article of the Liberal Pall Mall Gazette, however, was quite sarcastic about Salisbury's frequent changes of front regarding the invasion menace, and inquired

How far can we trust him in his latest mood, a placid confidence that everything is for the best in the best of all possible War Offices?

Even more unsettling was the prospect that Salisbury's unstable balance of mind was shared by his Cabinet colleagues: the country had accepted assurances that the home defences were perfect, although it was notorious that chaos had recently reigned at a home defence review at Aldershot. The Gazette concluded:

one does not need the vision of a vulture to perceive that the French Government are buying enormous quantities of steam coal from us, and that their Exhibition is not succeeding quite as it should; that they are still talking about Fashoda and our hysterical championship of DREYFUS. How if we get, not shooting stars, but a thunderbolt?²

Maxse expressed similar anxieties in the National Review, and stated that recent naval manoeuvres had revealed "during a short absence of the superior fleet the inferior Sea-power could transport and land a formidable force." The French, nurtured on Napoleonic legends and encouraged by the Germans who wished to see the experiment tried, might launch an invasion "this autumn, when the pacific influence of the Exhibition has passed away and France relapses into domestic discord."³

The Daily Express took the opportunity to run a series of alarmist articles by Colonel Eustace Balfour, one of the more articulate of the

1. Times. 28 July 1900. p. 11.

2. "November Next." Pall Mall Gazette. 28 July 1900. p.1.

3. "The Grand Raid." National Review. September 1900. pp. 13-14.

Volunteer lobbyists in the Commons and the brother of the future Prime Minister. In introducing this series, the paper's editorial warned that

In only one previous instance within the past hundred years has France been so well prepared to strike hard at us in our island home as she is today. She has a really fine fleet mobilized at Cherbourg, and no fewer than six army corps are at the present time gathering for manoeuvres at Chatres. ¹

It appeared that the peril first discovered by the St. James Gazette was now to be substantiated. The Express demanded that steps be taken to prohibit the export of steam-coal from England, as it was folly to believe that the Channel - "that herring pond" - was any protection from France. Balfour's articles continued in much the same vein, warning that the French stroke would come when the British Army was 7000 miles away and the Fleet was "chasing itself in the fogs off Ireland." The French, Balfour believed, might seize British liners like pirates to provide themselves cross-Channel transport and would occupy Antwerp with the connivance of the Belgians.

Every moral obligation, all fear of retribution, all question of the sacrifice of life and material that will be involved, will be completely ignored. Everything will be sacrificed to success.

Balfour believed he knew also why Wemyss had warned of an attack in November: it was in this month that the rearmament of French forces would be completed. All indications were that the French Army had some great adventure in view, for

During the last three months the arms factories for both cannons and rifles have been working night and day with feverish haste, and, as a matter of fact, the whole twenty of the French Army Corps are now equipped with the new quick-firing gun.²

1. "Keep Watch and Ward." Daily Express. 30 July 1900. p.4.

2. Ibid. 31 July 1900.

These articles prompted the writing of several letters to the Daily Express. One Major-General advocated the return of two British Army Corps to England to act as a tranquilizing influence on the designing soldiers of the Continent. Another letter writer warned that France might re-open the Egyptian question as a pretext to declare war and invade England.¹ The newspaper celebrated the end of the articles by beginning a new fictional serial, which pictured one million French and Russian soldiers camping in France following the close of the Exposition, preparing to descend upon England in the spring.²

The Army Manoeuvres of 1900, held at Aldershot in August 1900, seemed to sustain the case of those who warned of future danger. The exercise, designed to test the home defence army, featured the mass-manoeuving of large formations made up of elite units of the Auxiliary Forces. The show-case manoeuvres, however, were a conspicuous failure; untrained Volunteer officers were unable to retain control of large masses of troops and frequently large formations marched off on their own, colliding with one another. With characteristic bluntness, Wolseley declared that the home defence army was no army at all and "was unfit to take the field." This was grist to the mills of the alarmists: Stead claimed the country would be defenceless against 50,000 of the enemy; another embittered ex-Volunteer complained that the public had mistaken his uniform for that of an escaped convict.³

1. Daily Express. 2 August 1900, p.3; 24 August 1900, p.3.

2. Ibid. "The White Terror." 27 August 1900, p.4 and following issues.

3. Public Opinion. 24 August 1900. p. 225.

W.T. Stead. Review of Reviews. September 1900. pp. 210-211.

Ralph Neville, Q.C. "National Defence". Monthly Review. November 1900. p. 61.

By August, however, it began to be believed that invasion would not be tried this year. The Spectator argued persuasively

Depend upon it, if the French ever try to invade it will be when the fear of invasion is not in men's minds, and not when the project of invasion has been discussed for six months previously. If France had meant invasion her moment would have been last March, when the regular troops had for the most part left the country and when our stores of ammunition and of guns were at their lowest.¹

The paper went on to point out that now British artillery was replenished and the Auxiliary Forces were better trained. If the French were to launch an autumn invasion they would be allowing the British to choose the time. The Pall Mall Gazette pointed out that November was an inauspicious time for a French invasion, for the French regiments at that time of the year would have just lost their most experienced men, and instead be filled with raw recruits. Even if the Army overthrew the Government, they would be deterred from an invasion project from fear of the Germans at their backs, as well as by the advice of the Czar, who would warn them that an attack on England would bring a general European War.²

One of the unique features of the invasion scare of 1900 was the emphasis of the alarmists upon the speed of the anticipated French advance to London. This had its roots in the recent development of the automobile, in which France in 1900 led the world. It was noticed that motorcars were used in the French Army manoeuvres in 1900 and this gave rise to fears that they would be employed in a lightning thrust towards London. William Cairns, writing to the National Review, warned that

1. "The Talk of a French Invasion." Spectator. 25 August 1900. p. 229.

2. Ibid.

"Recent improvements in locomotion have placed London within little more than twenty-four hours of any point between Dover and Portsmouth."¹

Another amateur strategist remarked in the R.U.S.I. Journal that the motorcar might revolutionise future conditions.

Motor vehicles, travelling at the rate of 20 or more miles per hour, will give great facilities for seizing advanced points... The vision is of steel-plated motor wagons with machine guns mounted upon them, working in aid of the infantry by conveying groups of them rapidly from point to point.²

If this was true, it had important implications in national defence strategy. Any plan for saving the metropolis should have the defending force ready after only twelve hours of warning, in contrast to the ten days allowed in the present official planning, which was drawn up in 1888. This meant that only Regular troops could be employed, and only 24,000 of these would be ready in time. In the new motor age a completely new mobilization schedule was required: instead of taking three or four days to march to London, the enemy might now use motorcars to ride there within 24 hours.³ What was left unexplained was how the French would succeed in loading and unloading sufficient motorcars for the invasion army. Each new development in technology seemed to pose a new threat to the alarmists, but while these appeared to aid the aggressors, they did not, for each new development in an increasingly sophisticated military technology meant that the invaders would be encumbered by more equipment at the crucial stage of disembarkation.

1. W.E. Cairns. "The Problem of Invasion." National Review. November 1900. p. 355.

2. J.H.A. MacDonald. "Infantry in a New Century." R.U.S.I. Journal. March 1901. p. 252.

3. W.E. Cairns. Op.Cit. pp. 356-359.

New inventions could be used by the defenders just as effectively, and certainly more easily.

Another aspect of this same phenomenon was the fear, often expressed, that the French might use cyclists to speed their advance. Cairns believed that the invading infantry might wade inshore with lightweight folding bicycles strapped to their backs. But other writers pointed out correctly that technical progress in transport would redound to the benefit of home defence. Railways, motor vehicles, and cycles, were certainly available in greater quantities to the defender.¹

But the most obvious characteristic of the scare were the many attempts to transpose the lessons of the Boer War to the problem of home defence, and this was another chapter in the long struggle between the amateurs of the Auxiliary Forces and the professionals of the War Office for control of home defence. The real war had provided several innovations which seemed to reinforce the arguments of the amateurs. It provided the first major introduction to smokeless powder and skillfully-organized guerillas provided with modern, and sometimes superior, rifles and artillery. It demonstrated conclusively that invisibility, concealment and the rifle defence were powerful factors in war, and all these arguments were quickly appropriated by the advocates of the Volunteer Forces. The Boer War had provided the Auxiliary Force apologists with a new and stronger case. . The Spectator asserted that

i.J.H.A. MacDonald. Op. Cit. p. 252.

the Boers had taught Britain the art of changing capitals to provide a new centre of resistance to invasion, and urged that similar steps be taken if London were ever lost to the enemy.¹ Strachey went on to press for a quick adaptation of Boer tactics in home defence.

Let the Volunteers be trained to move rapidly, and to seize and entrench defence positions, not aiming at the scientific accuracy of engineers, but rather at that independent and individual provision of shelter which has produced such excellent results in the case of the Boers ... to spread themselves along a great stretch of upland country, each man constructing a burrow from which he can shoot without being shot.

Strachey advocated that the Volunteer should seek to become an imitation Boer rather than an imitation Regular.²

This doctrine was adopted also by Arthur Conan Doyle, one of Strachey's close friends who was the most active, elegant, and outspoken of the home defence tacticians. Conan Doyle announced in Cornhill's Magazine that

with a moderate efficiency with a rifle the able-bodied population of this country could without its fleet and without its professional soldiers defy the united forces of Europe. A country of hedgerows would with modern weapons be the most terrible entanglement into which an army could wander. The advantage of the defence over the attack and of the stationary force against the one that has to move, is so enormous and has been so frequently proved by the Boers against ourselves, as well as ourselves against the Boers, that the invasion of Kent or Sussex, always a desperate operation, has now become an impossible one.³

When Conan Doyle went on to enlarge upon themes such as these in a book,

1. "The Talk of a French Invasion." Spectator. 25 August 1900. p.229.
2. "The Volunteers," Ibid. 21 July 1900. pp. 70-71. 17 March 1900. p.753.
3. "Some Military Lessons of the War." Arthur Conan Doyle. Cornhill Magazine October 1900. pp. 433-446.

The Great Boer War, these were condemned in a Times leader as "radically unsound." With suspicious timeliness, Colonel Lonsdale Hale appeared in the Times letter column to attack Conan Doyle's doctrines, especially his contention that military drill was worthless, and that rifle practice was alone important.¹ The Colonel's critique was expanded to an article in the Nineteenth Century, in which he provided his semi-professional view of home defence. Hale began by pointing out that the heavily industrialised character of England gave the home island of a peculiar military characteristic. The interconnection of roads, railways, telegraph and telephone communications, etc. meant that England herself was one huge position, without outposts. In such a position, argued ^{Colonel} ~~Colonial~~ Hale, victory would go to that force which was most adept at manoeuvring rapidly and skilfully, i.e. the best professional first-line troops.² Doyle and his allies, he charged were greatly in error in using the South African situation as an analogy and argument for their schemes, for that country was so dissimilar to Britain that it held few lessons for home defence. In fact, "The defence of this country", Hale stated, "is so peculiar that the records of the past everywhere in the world throw little light on what may happen in the future."

Doyle replied in the following issue of the Nineteenth Century, saying that he had never advocated the Volunteer rifleman as the first

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1. Arthur Conan Doyle. The Great Boer War. Smith, Elder, London, 1900. pp. 518-537. Times. 30 October 1900, p.6; 1 November, p.8.
Col. Lonsdale Hale. "The Home Generals and Their Work in the Coming Autumn." Nineteenth Century. July 1900. p.27.
 2. Col. Lonsdale Hale. "Sham Versus Real Home Defence." Ibid. February 1901. pp. 248-267.

line of defence, and emphasized the subsidiary role of the Auxiliary troops in home defence. He believed that if only enough men and rifles were made available, British numerical superiority would prevail over the invader.¹ A Regular Officer, in the course of a lecture at the R.U.S.I., took time to chide Doyle for his amateurish meddlings in tactics, singling out his doctrine of the hedgerow defence and the general contention of the amateurs that the armies would be restricted to the roads of England, as a special point of criticism. The officer argued that Napoleon had always marched directly across country, and asserted that

How the gros of an invading army should march from the coast to London, leaving the roads to the heavily wheeled traffic, has been studied and settled in every War Office in Europe except ours.²

Not only was the enclosed country of England no deterrent to the invading hosts, but it was asserted that "Hedgerows, fences or walls are stepping stones, to the attack, and a disadvantage to the front of a defence."³ But the home defence enthusiasts were not curbed; one Reverend C.G. Gull advocated in the R.U.S.I. Journal that small boys should be used in time of emergency to "line our hedges and ditches" as they were smaller and less visible than full-sized defenders.⁴

As the tactical debate continued in its well-worn tracks, the invasion scare was kept alive by the news from Paris or Berlin. Invasion projects were continually produced by Continental journals and

1. A. Conan Doyle. Nineteenth Century, March 1901. pp. 406-415.

2. Major-General C.E. Webber. "Army Reform Based on Some 19th Century Lessons in Warfare." R.U.S.I. Journal. April 1901. p. 382.

3. Ibid. p. 384.

4. Rev. C.G. Gull. Ibid. February 1901. p. 123.

were translated and reprinted by certain London papers. In August La Patrie proposed the landing of an invasion force in the Thames Estuary, which would then be mined to prevent reprisals by the Royal Navy, while the invaders glided into the city of London on the crest of the tide.¹ The Daily Mail also reproduced a German satirical account of a Teutonic swoop on London, made possible by a secret weapon sold to Germany by a Birmingham arms firm. Illustrations depicted Cecil Rhodes dangling from a lamp-post and the victorious German armies marching through London in victory.² At the same time, Vanity Fair warned that

the danger is in the fall of the French government, in a coup d'état, in a popular war that shall satisfy the ignorant spite of the French bourgeoisie. And there is no doubt at all that that might possibly lead to an effective invasion by fifty or a hundred thousand French soldiers.³

At the end of the year, the French peril was given a new lease of life. As the French senate discussed the naval estimates General Mercier, a former Minister of War, rose to propose an invasion of England. Referring to the many attempts at invasion of England, Mercier mentioned that Von der Goltz had pronounced it possible, Salisbury had expressed certain fears, and Dilke and Wolseley had dwelt on the possibility. When the General began to outline his own scheme, he was asked by the Senate President not to go into details. But the General persisted and said that preparations were required to make Britain respect France and would be "a Damocles sword to be drawn or not at discretion." At this remark the Chamber burst into ironic laughter, and the Minister of Marine

1. "A French Plan of Invasion." Daily Mail. 13 August 1900. p. 4.

2. "When England fights the Teuton." Ibid. 23 August 1900. p. 7.

3. Quoted in Ibid. 30 August 1900. p.4.

dissociated himself from Mercier's project. Reaction in Britain was comparatively muted: The Times was content to quote the acid comments of a Paris review which alluded to the recent French expedition to Madagascar, an unrelieved disaster in which 6000 deaths had been incurred without the aid of the enemy.

I think that Englishmen should desire but one thing - namely, that the invasion of England should be directed by General Mercier and that the command of the vessels required for the transport of the troops should be confined to a sailor of his calibre.¹

The Daily Mail published an "Interview with the French Invader" and later published a plan, allegedly from the hand of a French General Staff officer, which provided for the landing of 50,000 French troops, who were instructed to take prominent citizens as hostages, to requisition all supplies, and to shoot all Britons who resisted them.² Although this was advertised as Mercier's plan, it had little in common with the known features of Mercier's scheme and was probably an example of the Mail's imaginative sensationalism. The affair caused little stir in England, indicating that public apprehension over invasion had died down. An English Army Captain, a "hero of Ladysmith", probably spoke for many of his compatriots when he remarked that "French Admirals were too intelligent to make such preposterous remarks." He believed the only remedy was to constantly strengthen the Navy.³

After the contentious French Manoeuvres of Autumn 1900 had taken

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1. Times. 6 December 1900. pp. 5-6. See also: Public Opinion. 14 December 1900, p. 756; Daily Mail, 6 December 1900, p.5. and 18 December 1900, p.3.
 2. "To Capture London." Daily Mail. 13 December 1900. p. 17.
 3. Ibid. 18 December 1900. p.3.

place, the confidential Army Intelligence report failed to mention any evidence of a conspiracy against England. This was confirmed by a British writer who was present, who reported none the less than an invasion adventure was a popular topic in the barracks and messes. A young and distinguished French officer had told him that France would lure the Channel Fleet away for 48 hours so that 100,000 troops could be landed in England. He had said

The English! I know the English. We should kill a few, we should march on London and kill a few more, and when they saw that the others would stop fighting and pay ... it would be a flying column, but what of that? There would be very little danger, and we should make our ammunition at Woolwich.¹

Such sentiments were widespread in the French army.

Perversely, the English press virtually ignored the French army manoeuvres of 1901, which were in part arranged for their benefit, featuring a series of practice amphibious landings and rapid disembarkation of cyclist troops "to show our neighbours on the other side of the Channel that we are thinking about them."² The promotion of an invasion scare in England was an avowed part of French naval policy at this time, but these most significant exercises received scant notice in Britain.³

Paris-inspired alarms, however, did continue throughout 1901 with lesser frequency. A French officer's article of the French Army Manoeuvres of 1901 was reprinted in the Pall Mall Magazine, complete with

1. A661. "Confidential Foreign Manoeuvres. 1900." Intelligence Division, War Office, 1901, pp. 12-23. H. Somers Somerset. "Army Manoeuvres in France." Nineteenth Century. November 1900. p. 814.
2. Lt. Col. Delaunay. "Is the Invasion of England Possible?" Pall Mall Magazine. November 1901. pp. 395-98.
3. Harder. Op.Cit. 375n-369. Ropp. Op. Cit. p. 358. Only the Daily Mail took notice. See "The Invasion of England". 5 Sept. 1901. p. 5

photographs of French cyclists bounding through surf over the caption "hastening to meet the enemy." A French Admiral was quoted as saying "to land in England is the work of a moonless night." The article, published as an indication of contemporary thinking in France, concluded as follows:

The invasion of English territory by a French army is a simple and easy operation, even if admitting the rather improbable case of the English fleet being still the mistress of the seas. The army of invasion, once landed in our neighbour's country, could, if it were victorious, do without any outside help, and find in England the necessary resources for living and fighting.¹

About the same time, the appearance of the first volume of Desbrière's monumental study of Napoleon's attempt at the invasion of England, which was commissioned by the French General Staff, inspired a long review in the Daily Mail, which noted that the French army had been devoting much attention to the project for the last two years.² The Times also took notice of this most interesting book.

British concern over military matters and interest in problems connected with defence were manifest in the General Election of October 1900, for the so-called 'Khaki Election' returned a predominantly khaki House of Commons. One retired Admiral and former M.P. complained at the R.U.S.I.

Sir, the military element have more representatives in Parliament than any other class of society. They have a

1. Lt. Col. Delaunay. "Is the Invasion of England Possible?" Pall Mall Magazine. November 1901. p. 398. See also Daily Mail. 5 September 1901. p. 5.

2. "The Eve of Invasion." Daily Mail. 12 November 1901. p. 4.

hundred soldiers, of sorts, in the House of Commons. I said "of sorts" designedly, but there are only two sailors left now since I have left the House.¹

A member of the Military group in the Commons referred to "sixty or seventy military Members of this House"² but this probably referred only to Regular Officers and not the many who held or had held commissions in the Volunteers, Militia or Yeomanry. As a reflection of this, the introduction of the Army Estimates on March 8th, 1901 were unusually well attended and the debate was extraordinarily long. Army reform was in the air, and for once, the Secretary of State for War had a large, attentive, and critical audience. St. John Brodrick introduced his proposals to/^{most} various defence contingencies.

In the first place, whenever we talk of home defence, let us not confuse our minds by considering the position and action of the Navy. The Navy is obviously our first line of defence, and if all naval matters were matters of certainty, we might dispense with an army for home defence altogether. I quite agree that invasion may be an off-chance, but you can not run an Empire of this size on off-chances.³

He went on to outline a new scheme for the Army which featured six corps stationed at home in the British Isles, but which met with a generally hostile reception. Campbell-Bannerman, who had been prompted by Sir John Colomb to make a case for a small home army, stated in reply to Brodrick that a true military policy included "a complete defence of our shores ... For this purpose nothing will be grudged, no demand will be refused." Even Gladstonian Liberals were concerned for the defence of the homeland. But he took issue with Brodrick's proposals

1. R.U.S.I. Journal. April 1901. p. 411.

2. Hansard. (Commons) 8 March 1901. col. 1623.

3. Ibid. Col. 1062.

on the grounds that they would bring about an overly large and expensive army. Sir William Harcourt, one of the Liberal spokesmen on defence, also attacked the scheme on this ground and remarked that it had "all the marks of haste and undigested conception."¹ Balfour, on the Government side, sprang to Brodrick's defence, defending the proposed six Army Corps partially on the grounds that they were required to meet invasion, "if invasion we have to fear."² Dilke delivered a long and impressive speech in the Blue Water tradition, deploring the planning that would leave half a million men at home when command of the sea was the truest defence of the country. He agreed with Harcourt that the Commons would vote any sum to retain the British command of the sea, but this "enormous horde of men with rifles for home defence" was quite another matter.³ Sir John Colomb made another unsuccessful attempt at having the motion framed in its proper context of sea supremacy, but got nowhere. The debate continued for several evenings inconclusively.

Simultaneously, a similar debate was taking place in the House of Lords. Here the circumstances somewhat recall those of 1888. Wolseley had recently been retired as Commander-in-Chief, and the effect of this was to free the old soldier to make public pronouncements on his

1. Hansard (Commons) 8 March 1901. col. 1644. Campbell-Bannerman wrote to a friend at this time that he considered the critical area not to be South Africa, but Europe. (J.A. Spender. Life of Campbell-Bannerman. Vol. I. p. 275.)

2. Ibid. Col. 1657.

3. Ibid. Col. 1667.

favourite subjects. The first-fruits of this new freedom were a series of unedifying and recriminating exchanges in the Lords between Wolseley and Lansdowne, the newly-retired Secretary of State for War. Home defence entered into the controversy when Lansdowne accused Wolseley of contempt for the role of the Auxiliary Forces. Wolseley defended himself by quoting memoranda he had forwarded to Lansdowne on their behalf, noting that the Volunteers had only

obsolete guns, mostly old muzzle-loaders, which from want of horses, can only be used as guns of position. Their shell-fire and range is contemptible, and it would be cruel, if not a crime, to send these auxiliary forces into action ... When I contemplate the possibility of having to use our Volunteer artillery with the absurd guns now in their possession, I do not know whether to laugh or to cry.¹

Lansdowne retorted that Wolseley had not been lax in calling attention to these certain matters, but that he had failed to give the Volunteers a full role in the defence of the country. The round, on balance, seems to have gone to Lansdowne on this issue, but Wolseley continued to throw fuel on the embers of controversy. On July 28th he asserted in the House of Lords:

I do not think this or any Government would be justified in confiding to the Auxiliary Forces alone the defence of this country. There is one thing quite certain, that if this country is ever invaded - and to say that is² impossible is, to my mind, to speak like a madman...

Viscount Hampden, however, on the same occasion, expressed the opinion that the country had never been less exposed to the threat of invasion and was astonished at the Government's policy of increasing the home

1. Hansard (Lords) 15 March 1901. col. 10. The quotations involve readings from two separate memoranda in the original.

2. Ibid. 28 June 1901. col. 231.

army. He protested most of all against Brodrick's statement that the position and power of the Royal Navy need not be considered at all in discussing defence against invasion.¹ Lord Selborne on another occasion derided the contention of the alarmists that Britain's foes were pirates who would attack without warning - as a most "extravagant hypothesis."²

Wolseley's alarm over invasion was challenged by a bold article by Winston Churchill, M.P., which presented the navalist case in the most uncompromising terms. Churchill asserted in the Daily Mail that

We must view military expenditure with a critical and jealous eye ... We do not want a regular Army for the defence of this island, or for foreign war with European powers, and we ought not to raise troops for either purpose. In the former case they would not be needed. In the latter they would not be enough ... For the defence of Britain we must depend upon Yeomanry, Militia, and Volunteers, made more efficient by money saved by the reduction of the home regular establishment.³

The Daily Mail editorial continued in like vein, arguing that if the command of the sea were lost, millions of invaders could be poured into the country. These could not be defeated, for Britain had neither trained officers, the organization, the weapons, or the men necessary. It was therefore of paramount importance to concentrate upon the Navy and keep the command of the sea, and to vouchsafe that the national sustenance was not "frittered away in fads and fancies."⁴

These articles naturally produced angry letters, which were printed

1. Hansard (Lords) col. 212.

2. Ibid. 5 July 1901. col. 962.

3. Winston Churchill, M.P. "The Only Way." Daily Mail. 18 June 1901. p.4.

4. "The Old Motto." Ibid.

by the Mail. Colonel Underwood of the Volunteers accused Churchill of seeing the two services as two entities, when they were rather inter-dependent bodies in home defence. He argued that a strong defensive army would greatly lighten the task of the Navy and add to its defensive power. Churchill countered that the two services were natural competitors for the limited funds made available for defence by the Government, saying "I have always contended that in a certain sense making the Army strong is making the Navy weak." Whereas the Colonel had wished to strengthen the Navy indirectly through the Army, Churchill charged, he wished to strengthen it directly through itself.¹

As the unrelenting battle continued between partisans of the two services, a third group pressed the claims of the auxiliary forces. The Spectator, now commended and encouraged behind the scenes by the new Commander-in-Chief, Lord Roberts, agitated for better training and equipment for the Volunteers. Roberts wrote to Strachey in favour of rifle clubs, more shooting and less drill, and supported Strachey's idea of giving free rifle licences to those who passed a marksmanship test. Strachey went on to urge as Lord Wemyss had earlier, that a Home Defence Reserve of ex-Regulars be established, and that the rifle club movement become more widespread.² Salisbury's appeal had fallen upon fertile

1. Daily Mail. 20 June 1901. p. 4. 22 June 1901. p. 4.

2. "Rifle Clubs and Volunteers." Spectator. 5 January 1901. pp. 6-7.
"Home Defence Reserve." Ibid. 12 January 1901. p. 41.
"Vigilance Committee." Ibid. 7 July 1900. pp. 6-7.
"The New Army Scheme." Ibid. 16 March 1901. pp. 376-77.
"The Volunteers." Ibid. 21 July 1900. pp. 70-71.
"Automatic Register of Riflemen." Ibid. 29 July 1900. p.
Strachey MSS. 1901. Roberts to Strachey: 10 March 1901, 29 July 1901, 25 December 1901.

ground as far as the people were concerned, and rifle clubs grew by leaps and bounds. In a military age, and in a nation which prided itself on pluck, initiative, and the amateur spirit, it was inevitable that the national defence became a public concern, and that suggested remedies for the security of England almost assumed the proportions of a national suggestion contest. Brodrick had stated on one occasion that suggestions from outside the War Office were just as valuable as those emanating from within, and for his pains had received "coal-scuttles full of letters and even confidential postcards" (!) of unsolicited advice for preserving the country from invasion.¹ Books and pamphlets appeared which advocated conscription or the enactment of the Militia Ballot as remedies for home defence.²

The multiplicity of remedies and the unrelenting efforts of the three contending lobbies for home defence: the Army, ^{the Navy,} and the Auxiliary Forces, produced an incoherent and confused policy, and this incoherence and confusion was communicated to the public. Leo Marx complained in the National Review (January 1901) that sometimes the Navy was represented as an adequate defence against attack; other times every man was exhorted to carry a rifle, while in the meantime millions had been spent

1. R.U.S.I. Journal. August 1901. p. 946.

2. George F. Shree. The Briton's First Duty. The Army League, London, 1901. Sidney Low. "The Military Weakness of England and the Militia Ballot." Nineteenth Century. January 1900. pp. 14-28.
George Wyndham. "Our Paper Home Army." Today. 9 August 1900.
Major Gleichen. "The Bed-Rock of Army Reform." National Review. February 1901. pp. 786-797.

on a force that Lansdowne, the retiring Secretary of State for War, had said was no army at all.¹ Salisbury's frequent changes of front were both discouraging and demoralizing.

Many Englishmen would have agreed with a writer in the National Review who believed that Britain's lowered military prestige would provide an almost irresistible temptation to her Continental adversaries that would result in a sudden and unexpected attack, such as he prophesized, beginning with

... a great fleet of transports, herded by torpedo craft and warships, closing with the British coasts in the dark hours of the morning. I can see the swift launches towing boats crammed with infantry through the smooth water into the shadow of the cliffs, and then returning empty to the transports for fresh loads. I can follow, in my mind's eye, the infantry as they quickly push a little way inland, seizing the nearest farms and cottages, placing the terrified inmates under guard, and pouncing upon any wayfarer who might give the alarm. Ere the sun was well over the horizon many thousand men and many guns would be on shore, thousands more would be following them with the utmost speed, while London, the heart of the Empire, would be slowly awakening from its slumbers to find every telegraphic wire cut, many railways blocked, unconscious of the enemy already firmly established on British territory.²

This nightmare vision was dramatized further in such novels as A New Trafalgar, London's Peril, The Sack of London in the Great French War of 1901, The New Battle of Dorking, and How The Germans Took London.³

1. National Review. January 1901. p. 472.

2. W.E. Cairns. "The Problem of Invasion." Ibid. November 1900. p. 351.

3. Col. F.N. Maude. The New Battle of Dorking. Grant Richard, London, 1900.
T.W. Offin. How The Germans Took London. Durrant, Chelmsford, 1900.
Anonymous. The Sack of London in the Great French War of 1901.
White, London, 1901. F.M. Allen. London's Peril. Downey, London, 1900.
Max Pemberton, Pro Patria. Ward, Lock & Co. London, 1901.
A.C. Curtis. A New Trafalgar. Smith, Elder & Co. London, 1902.
See also: I.F. Clarke. Op. Cit.

One of these, The Invaders, which appeared in November 1901, was especially remarkable for its sensational descriptions of French and German hordes sweeping across England, who shoot and stab any Englishman they encounter in uniform. Any interfering civilians are "butchered remorselessly" and the French cavalry take special delight in cutting down unarmed police with their sabres. The allied looters systematically strip Sheffield and Birmingham of supplies and retire to a redoubt in the mountains.¹ These paper wars provide insight into contemporary concepts of what invasion involved, and also served as propaganda for various vested interests. In London's Peril Volunteer sharpshooters in hedgerows defeat the conscript invaders as they march in close formation across fields; in A New Trafalgar, Continental despoilers were held at bay by the Fleet. These pamphlets made little positive contribution to the national debate over defences, but rather tended to amplify the existing controversy over what would prove to be the most efficacious form of home defence.

The Government had provided no clear lead, and the ~~middle~~ in policy was echoed in the conflicting advice provided by writers in service magazines. A Captain of Royal Engineers advocated a typical engineer's

1. Louis Tracy, The Invaders. Newnes, London, 1901.

defence: he wished for obstacles to be constructed in villages and woods, and forts to be erected around London and at important naval harbours.¹ A civilian, writing in the R.U.S.I. Journal, worked on the basis that the enemy would not attempt invasion at all after defeating the British Fleet, but would rather blockade Great Britain. To meet this menace, he suggested that a national granary be established, which would provide a food supply for several months.² A later issue of the R.U.S.I. Journal featured a Major who advocated the digging of trenches around London by construction gangs as a form of national insurance, and a Colonel who advised that the continuous occupation of such a defensive line was not necessary or even possible, and instead advocated practice manoeuvres in the British countryside.³ The defence-minded public, united in a common apprehension of the invasion peril, were divided beyond recall on the best way of meeting it.

The invasion scare of 1900, fittingly and symbolically, bridged two centuries. It was the last and greatest of the classic nineteenth-century French invasion scares, and it is remarkable in the light of what was to come that apprehensions were almost completely directed towards France to the almost complete exclusion of Germany. The peril for once was not purely imaginary, for as Professor Ropp wrote

In 1900, the French were at least actively considering the question, and if the Channel force had actually been defeated or away, they might have tried it.⁴

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1. Capt. R.F. Sorbie. "Home Defence." United Services Magazine, May 1901. pp. 206-213.
 2. Stewart L. Murray. "Our Food Supply in Time of War." R.U.S.I. Journal. 1901. pp. 656-694.
 3. Maj. H.A. Bettell. "The Execution of the Field Defences of London." Ibid. August 1901, pp. 985-992; Col. J.D. Legard. "National Defence." Ibid. pp. 917-47.
 4. Theodore Ropp. Op.Cit. p- 535. See Appendix on French Invasion planning.

The crisis, broadly, had been occasioned by the inheritance of the nineteenth century: diplomatic isolation allied to a small army. But the old century was represented most strikingly by the central actors in the drama. Salisbury and Wolseley were both primarily nineteenth-century personalities, and were especially so in their emotive and intuitive approach to the threat of invasion. It would be left for their successors in the new century to solve the enigmas posed by the threat of invasion, and their solution would come through a twentieth century approach of scientific inquiry and rational analysis.

Already during the crisis, the transition was foreshadowed, indicated by Wolseley's retirement from the War Office in November, 1900, and the Queen's death in the third week of the new century. The process was completed by Salisbury's resignation from the Premiership in July, 1902. These strong links with nineteenth century military history were breaking and a new period of energy and change was ready to begin, which would see three heroic efforts at reform of British defensive organization by three successive Governments. The new century would bring a new ally, a new enemy, and new men to shed light on the old problem.

CHAPTER IV: TOWARDS AN ESTABLISHED POLICY, 1901-1903

The years 1901 to 1903 represented a great watershed in the history of British defence, for the South African War had revealed defects so striking that both Government and public demanded that long-overdue reforms be put into effect. The War Office was changed in personnel and organisation as the result of the recommendations of a number of official Commissions. In all these changes the invasion issue played a key role, for the existing organisation and distribution of the British Army was based on the possibility of a powerful overseas assault on London. Therefore, before the reforms could be carried into effect, and before military intuition could be supplanted by an analytical strategy, it was necessary for the reformers to deflate and devalue, if not to destroy, the nineteenth century invasion myth.

The difficulties they faced in so doing revealed that more was involved than the solution of a strategic imbroglio. Intangible but powerful factors were at work. Both services had in fact been fighting for the prestige and honour involved in defending the homeland. Both the naval and military departmental communications indicate that each service was far more flexible in dealing with the invasion issue within their own confines than when they faced one another. But when Admiralty and War Office officials confronted one another, attitudes stiffened, arguments became tighter, and tempers hotter. The dispute was basically a struggle for predominance: for the honour of defending the island Kingdom against aggression, and for the increased estimates this would

require. This goes far to explain the convoluted strategic arguments and continued bitter controversy which was to follow. Mutual suspicion and fear of subordination, especially on the part of the War Office, were dominant factors in interservice relations. Therefore, the successful imposition of a joint policy upon both services was to bring to a climax the bickering that had now been continuing for some 15 years between the services. The forces involved were so strong that it took the personal intervention of the Prime Minister, backed by strong civilian Ministers and prestigious official Commissions, to break the invasion deadlock.

The invasion scare of 1900 had provided one happy precedent for interservice cooperation. The Admiralty had succeeded in calling a joint conference on December 18, 1900, "to Consider the Strategic Conditions governing the Coast Defence of the United Kingdom in War as affected by Naval Considerations." The participants were Rear-Admiral Richard N. Custance, then D.N.I., with Captain Charles Briggs, R.N. and Major-General Ardagh, D.M.I., seconded by Colonel P. Lake, Assistant Adjutant-General. Although both Lake and Ardagh were fervent believers in invasion, the Admiralty succeeded in prevailing on this occasion by studiously avoiding all references to the word "Invasion," and the vexatious issue was excised from the frame of reference. Agreement came quickly. Only "raids", or limited attacks to damage communications and property were considered, and possible enemy objectives were limited to the destruction of signal stations and cable landing points, damage

to docks, arsenals, and shipping, and the sabotage of railways and telegraphs. Both sides agreed that attacks even on this scale would be isolated until the enemy gained command of the sea. It was assumed that the raid would be opposed, therefore the Conference decided that the enemy would attack only those objectives whose capture and destruction would compensate for the loss and capture of the raiding force. The only objective in Britain judged worthy of the loss of 5000 men were the
X Elswick Works and Tyne shipbuilding yards, near Edinburgh. A few objectives elsewhere were judged to be worth the expenditure of 2000 men. The Admiralty view prevailed: it was stated that the best defence against raids "will be a vigorous naval offensive." A torpedo boat attack was considered to be a far more likely form of attack in the opening days of war, and more damaging to British interests. This report was frequently cited later as a precedent for interservice cooperation.¹

Important changes took place in the War Office, following the retirement of Wolseley and Ardagh at the end of 1900. Lord Roberts, the new Commander-in-Chief, asked Lieutenant-General William Nicholson of the Indian Army to serve as his new Director-General of Military Intelligence. The new regime started off in a spirit of reform. From the beginning Nicholson expressed doubts over Brodrick's Army scheme which set up six Army Corps, three at home and three abroad. This scheme,

1. Adm 1/7491 "Suggested Conference for reviewing the strategic situation of various ports on mobilizing for home defence." 1 November 1900.
WO/ 106/44 "Report of a Conference between Admiralty and War Office Representatives to Consider the Strategic Conditions Governing the Coast Defence of the United Kingdom as affected by Naval Considerations." February 1901.

Nicholson complained, was "based on nothing in particular - no large schemes of offensive operations, or indeed of defensive operations outside the United Kingdom, have yet been formulated. Consequently how do we know that we require 3 Army Corps...?" Nicholson's first major act as D.G.M.I. was to order "schemes of offensive and defensive operations", the first of which dealt exhaustively with the needs of British defence in the worst conceivable contingency: a Franco-Russian War.¹ This paper, produced by Lieutenant-Colonel Altham of the Intelligence Department under Nicholson's direction, was the first comprehensive survey of a world strategy undertaken by British Military Intelligence. More significantly, from beginning to end it was in the Blue Water tradition. In the sections relevant to home defence, Altham called for a reduced home army and primary reliance on the fleet. The proper role of the Army was in overseas defence.² When the existence of Altham's paper came to the notice of the authorities two years later, it had a profound influence upon Government policy, as we shall see.

But this was far from being the dominant view in Military Intelligence. In November 1901, for example, Lt. Col. (later Field-Marshal and Chief of the Imperial General Staff) William Robertson completed a paper on French invasion in the military tradition of ignoring naval strategy as practiced by Ardagh and Wolseley. Robertson began by noting the great increase in French military power compared with 1870.

1. Roberts MSS. Case X 20926. Box N.2 R52/87. Nicholson to Roberts, 8 May 1901.

2. Cab 3/1/1A "Military needs of the Empire in a War with ^FFrance and Russia." completed 31 May 1901. approved by W.O. 12 August 1901.

Very different is the position of affairs today. France now has more than 3,300,000 trained men at her disposal, well armed, well led, and amply supplied with transport and war material of all kinds ... the recruiting law of 1889 will continue year by year to increase this number, to some extent, until it is in complete application in 1913.¹

Robertson warned that recent events were even more portentous. During 1898 "a new plan, No. 14, was secretly introduced, its avowed object being 'to put in 1st line all available troops of real solidity, with a view to obtaining an army for first shock, consequently for prompt decision of the war.'" French mobilisation procedures had therefore been simplified and accelerated. Further, French facilities for cross-Channel expeditions had been greatly improved in recent years. Robertson had discovered

twenty-six ports connected by rail with the interior, and several by canal as well. Eight, viz., Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, Dieppe, Havre, St. Malo, and Brest, are defended in greater or lesser strength, and often first-class facilities for the dispatch of an expeditionary force, while twenty-six others may be reckoned as second or third-class bases ...²

Not only did accelerated mobilisation procedures and improved harbour facilities alone point to an invasion in a future Anglo-French War, but French military tradition itself would see that the French General Staff would over-rule French naval objections to the scheme.

... with her large and thoroughly-prepared army, France will act ... in accordance with the offensive spirit and best traditions of the nation. If this be admitted, the only logical deduction is that an invasion of England will be attempted. The strength in which the attempt will be made is purely a matter of conjecture, since it must be chiefly governed by the conditions of the moment ... the

1. Cab 3/1/4A "The Military Resources of France, and probable Method of their Employment in a War between France and England." Lt.-Col. W.R. Robertson, A.Q.M.G. 27 December 1901, printed by C.I.D. 2 November 1903. p. 1.

2. Ibid. p. 4.

number of men might vary between 50,000 and 200,000 ...¹

Robertson believed that the opinion expressed by the military in the Landing Places Committee, that 14 days would suffice for the entire operation, "seems to err on the side favourable to France." It was necessary to place oneself in the position of the enemy planners, to divest oneself in the position of the enemy planners, to divest oneself of British prejudices, and to assimilate French psychology. The French would be motivated by the following considerations:

- (a) Invasion is the one opportunity, apart from alliances, of ending the war rapidly, and so saving the Colonies from certain ruin.
- (b) The prospective gain greatly exceeds the risk involved. If the attempt succeeds, the result will be enormous; if it fails, France will lose, say, 200,000 men at the most, or only one-sixteenth of her army. Napoleon was content in 1805 to accept the risk of losing practically the entire active army which France then possessed - 150,000 men.
- (c) England, who in former years has so often underestimated the powers of her opponents, does not really believe in the possibility of invasion; hence the attempt would have in it a large element of surprise - the greatest of all foes.
- (d) The real value of modern navies has not yet been ascertained in practice, and should it prove less than theoretically estimated the chances in favour of France will be correspondingly increased.
- (e) So promising was the result of invasion to Napoleon that he took nearly six years to organize the ports, troops, and flotilla for his army of England; to-day the whole machinery stands ready for immediate use.²

From all this it was abundantly clear - to Robertson - that invasion appeared to the French General Staff as "both attractive and feasible ... the only possible deduction is that it will be given a prominent place in the French plan of campaign." In fact, it would "remain the ultimate goal."

1. Cab 3/1/4A. p. 9.

2. Ibid.

But this form of psychologism really only presented a partial picture. If correct, Robertson's method could only determine whether invasion would be tried. But the far more important question remained: if attempted would it succeed?

No such considerations disturbed War Office authorities in early 1902. Lord Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief, read Robertson's paper and recommended it to Brodrick, as

A MOST interesting paper, well worth being read by the Cabinet. It confirms the belief I have held for many years that the invasion of England is far from being an impossibility.¹

Roberts' subsequent comments reveal a more significant motive behind his belief in the invasion contingency: it made possible an appeal for a large army. Roberts emphasized

... it would be imprudent to rely absolutely and conclusively on the navy for home defence, and to neglect the military precautions which would enable us to defeat any invading force which might be landed on our shores. Even from a purely naval view there is much to be said in favour of having a home army strong enough to render invasion a hopeless enterprise.²

To meet this threat, Roberts wanted "one Army Corps of Regulars, together with a large number of Militia and Volunteers", in unspecified numbers, always ready in Britain to repel invasion. He was especially concerned that the Auxiliaries be better trained and organized, and toward this end, suggested compulsory service for the Militia. Brodrick, to his credit, saw the weakness of Robertson's paper: it almost completely neglected the naval aspect of the problem. He asked about the power of the French to collect transport and to protect them from British attack while the

1. Cab 3/1/5A. "Minutes on Paper 4A." 29 January 1901. p. 1. Roberts to Brodrick. The quotation is taken from two separate paragraphs.

2. Ibid,

invasion was preparing, for all the French Channel ports were susceptible to naval bombardment. Roberts referred him to the report of the Landing Places Committee, and enthusiastically recalled the arrangements made by the British Government a century before to repel the expected Napoleonic invasion. 180,000 Militia and Regulars had been raised, aided by 400,000 Volunteers. Arrangements were made to evacuate the Court and national treasure to Worcester, while the cannon of Woolwich were dispatched to the Midlands by canal. Roberts concluded by reiterating Robertson's main theme.

It seems open to question whether our military strength and organization have been developed since the beginning of the last century to an extent proportionate to the military development of our continental neighbours, or to our own increase in population in wealth.¹

Brodrick was evidently impressed by this argument, and after the Army Estimates had been passed, forwarded the paper and Roberts' remarks to the Duke of Devonshire, Chairman of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet.

The 1902 annual intelligence report on foreign manoeuvres, produced for the perusal of British officers, also reveals War Office concern over the possibility of overseas attack. Nicholson, who wrote the preface, called attention to the fact that "a prominent feature of the Continental Manoeuvres of 1901 was that, in the case of France, Germany and Russia, the sea was made to play an important part in the operations."² This seemed to lend substance to the fear that the three greatest Continental military powers might combine against Britain. It certainly seemed

1. Cab 3/1/5A. p. 3. Roberts to Brodrick. 17 February 1902.

2. WO 32/225 A. 727 "Manoeuvres in Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Holland, Roumania, Russia, Servia, and Switzerland. 1901." I.D.W.O., 1902. p. 141.

strange that all three should decide upon opposed landings from the sea as a central part of their annual war game. But the report from France was reassuring.

The country in this neighbourhood strongly resembles that of the south of England ... The disembarkation appears to have been more theatrical than practical, and the chief instruction to be derived from it is to regard the experiment as an example of how a thing should not be done. No effort was made to carry out the operations under conditions that would prevail in war. The disembarkation was not covered by the Fleet; there was nothing in the war of surprise; the troops were very slow in getting ashore; and there was great confusion in the way they were landed, the boats coming up haphazard, without any system.¹

Later, a more rhapsodic version of the same operation by a French army officer was to be translated and published in an upper-class English magazine, which overlooked these aspects of the exercise, and instead openly hinted at the ease of a French invasion of England.²

These papers provide a picture of the atmosphere within the War Office just before the invasion issue was to be decided by the Government. It is obvious that some officers, like Altham, had thought the matter through, and had concluded that invasion was improbable. But Roberts, Nicholson, and Robertson especially had not changed their views, which were products of service careers confined to colonial wars. The dominant tendency in the War Office was still to believe in the possibility of overseas attack, and it was this majority view which impressed itself upon Broderick, Secretary of State for War between early 1901 and September 1903. Yet more subtle minds were at work, and eventually would prevail.

1. WO/32/225. A. 727. p.20. See also pp. 21-23, 29-34, and 88-89.

2. Lt. Col. Delauney. "Is the Invasion of England Possible?" Pall Mall Magazine. November 1901. pp. 395-398.

Divided counsels also existed in the Admiralty, behind the facade of monolithic unanimity on the impossibility of mass invasion. In August 1902 the Financial Secretary of the Admiralty, Mr. Hugh O. Arnold-Forster, had visited German dockyards and naval installations, and on his return had produced a memorandum as alarming in tone as anything produced by Military Intelligence. He wrote

In view of the great increase of the naval power of Germany, of the growth of the German ship-building yards in the North Sea and the Baltic, and of the perfect organization of the German army under the direction of the German General Staff, it is necessary to contemplate the possibility of an attempted landing on the east coast.¹

It is noteworthy that Arnold-Forster's notion that the "German danger was immediate" was not heatedly attacked in the inner councils of the Admiralty, but instead, received support. The Director of Naval Construction, Philip Watts, observed that "The landing of a large German force between Grimsby and Hull would no doubt go far to paralyze our defense and might conceivably bring the struggle to an end in a very short time. Vice-Admiral Richard Custance, the D.N.I., viewed the matter according to Colomb: all would depend on the Fleet and the great naval battle. But comments from other authorities did indicate some concern over the possibility of a German assault on the English coast.² The Admiralty itself was not as safe from conjecture as its pronouncements on policy led the public to believe.

Finally, in the last ten months of 1903, the two services and the

1. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50287) "Notes on a visit to Kiel and Wilhelmshaven, August 1902, and general remarks on the German Navy and Naval Establishments." 15 September - November 1902.

2. Ibid.

two contending pressure groups, the advocates of Auxiliary Forces and the partisans of the Blue Water School, succeeded in having their positions aired before two official bodies. The first of these was the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers, commonly known as the Norfolk Commission, after its Chairman, the Duke of Norfolk. The Commission, almost to a man, were strong partisans of the home defence forces. Lord Derby, Lord Grenfell, a commander in the South African War, Mr. Spencer Wilkinson, the Military Correspondent of the high-Tory Morning Post and advocate of the Volunteer cause, and Major-General Coleridge Groves, formerly of the Intelligence Department and the Defence of London planning staff, were its most articulate and powerful members, and each of them were convinced of the danger of invasion.

Relations between this body and the second - the more powerful Committee of Imperial Defence simultaneously weighing the possibility of invasion - were predictably acrimonious. The C.I.D. was made up of a completely different company: the highest professional officers of both services and their civilian ministers, under the direction of a civilian chairman and the Prime Minister. Although the two bodies dealt with the same problem, they reached diametrically opposed conclusions. The Norfolk Commissioners were vitally interested in preserving as much as possible of the Auxiliary Forces. Hence they had to adopt a sanguinary position on the possibility of invasion, and this resulted in a rather one-sided approach to the question. Between May and November, 1903, the Commissioners held 82 meetings and called 134 witnesses. Of these 134 only one was a naval officer, and he was convinced that invasion was possible,

owing to the many speculative articles in French and German periodicals.¹

The Norfolk Commission's first problem, however, if it was to deal with the numbers, organization, and equipment of the Auxiliary Forces, as their reference in the Royal Warrant had indicated, was to establish an expected scale of attack on the United Kingdom. The Commissioners had learned from Nicholson, their first witness, that the Admiralty had guaranteed immunity from overseas attacks of more than 10,000 men, but they noted that the Army home establishment of 330,000 troops in the British Isles, exclusive of Irish and garrison duties, was evidently set aside to oppose a future invasion of some size and force. The Commission therefore wrote to the Admiralty, asking for an official estimate regarding the conditions of a possible attack, and the probable strength of an enemy force. The Admiralty reply referred the Commissioners to the C.I.D., and this body was next contacted.² This time the Commissioners received a rather curt reply from the Duke of Devonshire, the Chairman of the C.I.D., who asserted at the prompting of the Earl of Selborne, First Lord of the Admiralty,³ that the Commission was not to inquire into the numbers of the Regular or Auxiliary Forces maintained for Home Defence, for this question was under consideration by the C.I.D. This was in fact

1. Parliamentary Papers: Reports from Commissioners. 1904. Vol. XXX. Cd. 2062. "Minutes of Evidence Taken Before the Royal Commission on Militia and Volunteers." Evidence of 'Admiral Sir John Hopkins. p.11 (hereafter cited as Cd.2062).

2. Ibid. Cd. 2061. "Report of the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers." 20 May 1904. p. 75 (Hereafter cited as Cd. 2061). Cab 4/1/5B "Inquiry as to the maximum and minimum limits of the invading force, and how far it would have to be met by Auxiliary Forces." 26 May 1903.

3. Cab 2/1 Committee of Imperial Defence: Minutes of Meetings 1-83. Minutes of 21st Meeting. 15 July 1903.

incorrect, as the Commissioner's Royal Warrant had expressly directed them to enquire into the numbers of the Auxiliary Forces.

The C.I.D. instead advised the Commissioners to accept the numbers mentioned in the current War Office Mobilization Scheme,¹ noted that they were now arriving at "an authoritative decision" as to the size of the force to be maintained in the United Kingdom for defence, and advised the Commission instead to concentrate upon recommending methods to make the Militia and Volunteers more efficient.² But the estimated scale of attack was an all-important figure to the Commissioners, for it was required as the basis of a home defence organization. They continued to press the C.I.D. for an authoritative estimate, and finally on August 5, the C.I.D. provided a tentative figure of 100,000 Militia and 200,000 Volunteers for the Commission to use as the basis of their inquiries, although the C.I.D. stressed that this was not necessarily a permanent estimate. In their final report to the King, the Commissioners complained that the Commission had

received no further communication from the Committee of Defence, and has no knowledge of any decision to which the Committee may have come on the subject of the conditions of possible invasion or of the number of troops required to repel it. It will be seen that we had not the means of reaching in any scientific manner an independent conclusion as to the adequate strength to be provided, and have had no authoritative estimate of that strength.³

The incident illustrates the political sensitivity of the invasion question and especially of the all-important estimate of the scale of anticipated

1. Cd. 2061. Devonshire to Norfolk. 22 June 1903. p. 76; Appendix A. p. 65 ff.

2. Ibid. "Memorandum from the Committee of Imperial Defence." 5 August 1903. p. 78.

3. Ibid.

attack, upon which hung all subsequent calculations as to the size of the home defence force. Concern over security may partially explain the C.I.D.'s lack of cooperation with the Commission, for the reports of Royal Commissions were always published and made available to the public.

But the Commission also represented the single-service viewpoint and amateur strategic speculation which the C.I.D. had been established to eliminate through its exhaustive inquiries and authoritative decisions. As seen before, the Commission was made up of older members of the House of Lord, retired soldiers, and conservative military writers, and only one of its 13⁴ witnesses was a naval officer. In contrast to this almost complete neglect of naval opinion on invasion, the Commissioners called before them practically every past and present eminent soldier - not to mention several nonentities - who had views on invasion. The first three witnesses called by the Commission were the then three highest military officials currently serving in the War Office: Roberts, Nicholson, Lt. Gen. Kelly-Kenny, the Adjutant-General,¹ In examining these and subsequent witnesses, Coleridge Groves distinguished himself as the most active protagonist of the invasion contingency, repeatedly drawing out witnesses on the question and attempting to get concrete figures for the size of an expected invasion force. The three active officers were immediately followed by the recently-retired Ardagh and Wolseley, whose utterances were no longer moderated by career considerations. Ardagh

1. Cd. 2062. p. 42.

prepared a nine-page detailed memoranda for the Commission, which gave a maximum of 100,000 invaders for a single crossing of the Channel.¹ Wolseley's testimony was more vigorous if less precise. He asserted that to depend solely on the Navy would be to live in a fool's paradise, and advocated conscription as the answer to the problem of national defence.²

Further witnesses were equally outspoken, if not as eminent.

Colonel F.W. Lake of Military Intelligence had no doubt as to the ease of the naval operation, testifying that

From all reports that I have seen, and from my own examination of the subject, there appears to be no inherent difficulty in, the actual operation of crossing the narrow seas and landing.

Lord Wemyss and Sir Howard Vincent delivered their customary panygeric on the Volunteer Force and the perils of invasion,⁴ as did a host of Volunteer Colonels. The National Service League, recently formed to lobby for universal military service, was represented in the person of its President, the Duke of Wellington, and its secretary, Mr. George Shee. The Duke stated that the N.S.L.'s programme was based on the supposition "that the risk of invasion of this country is a serious one" and Mr. Shee thought that over 200,000 invaders could arrive from France, on the basis of recent French conjectures he had read. The Commission and its witnesses, in short, represented every conceivable vested interest involved in keeping the invasion issue before the public.

1. Ardagh MSS. PRO 30/40/13 "Liability of the United Kingdom to Invasion." June 1903, by Ardagh.

2. Cd. 2062. pp. 55 and 62.

3. Ibid. p. 102.

4. Ibid. pp. 233-38; 282-83.

5. Ibid. pp. 239-40.

This became manifest when the Commission's report was published on May 28, 1904. The Commissioners began by noting that the large numbers of Volunteers and Militia recommended to be retained in the Kingdom by both the War Office and C.I.D. could not

be reconciled with the assumption that this country can rely for its defence against invasion solely on the Navy. Each of them points to protection against attack more formidable than a raid by 5,000 or 10,000 men. An effective force - in other words, an army - of the strength proposed to us, can be required only to meet an invasion ... undertaken only by one of the great European powers, which possess forces highly trained and ready to move in large numbers at the shortest notice.¹

This threat, the Commissioners believed, was the raison d'être of the Auxiliary Forces, as well as of their reform.

The Militia exist chiefly, and the Volunteers solely, for the purpose of resisting a possible invasion of the United Kingdom, which would be attempted only by a first rate army. This purpose will not be fulfilled merely by a brave or creditable, but unsuccessful resistance; it requires the defeat of the enemy. The standard of efficiency to be aimed at is therefore not a matter of opinion; the conditions of war and of the battle field must be met, and no lower standard can be laid down.²

But even if the recommendations of the Commissioners were carried into effect, these would make the Militia and Volunteers an effective force against invasion only with the help of the Regular Army, for they could not stand alone. To bring about this standard of resistance, the Commissioners recommended universal military training for all male Britons in their twentieth year, which would provide 380,000 men annually. The Commissioners concluded:

1. Cd. 2061. p. 5.

2. Ibid.

a home defence army capable, in the absence of the whole or the greater portion of the regular forces, of protecting this country against invasion can be raised and maintained only on the principle that it is the duty of every citizen of military age and sound physique to be trained for the national defence, and to take part in it should emergency arise.¹

This recommendation was not unanimous and one Commissioner, Sir Ralph Knox, issued a separate Report in the orthodox Blue Water vein,² but the majority view was the one which prevailed and had the most effect on public opinion.

The Norfolk Commission had repeated the great mistake of most of the previous official bodies that had sought to overhaul the British military machine. It had neglected to examine the most important question of all: what were the military forces under examination for? What would they do in war? For more than a decade civilian experts had been pointing out that the organization and distribution of military force implied a strategy based on anticipated military requirements. For the same period these pleas had been largely ignored. Now, owing to two factors, the civilian experts were finally to impose their arguments on the War Office. Nicholson had already made a beginning in this direction, and he was helped by allies outside the War Office. The first great force was for reform, as we have seen, was the public outcry over the military disasters of the Boer War. The second force was the personality of Arthur James Balfour, who had succeeded Salisbury as Prime Minister in June 1902 and who was uniquely fitted to make constructive use of the public outcry. In Balfour were combined a subtle intellect which could embrace the arguments of the

1. Cd. 2061. p. 16.

2. Ibid. pp. 49-54.

strategists, as well as the political power to put them into effect. While yet in his twenties, Balfour had written an important work in metaphysics entitled A Defence of Philosophic Doubt (1879) and he had an international reputation as a philosopher in addition to his political accomplishments. His peculiar talents for resolving the invasion quarrel between the services were recognized even by his contemporaries. One wrote in 1904:

In Mr. Balfour the country possessed a Minister with a mind sharpened by dialectics, and a temper chastened by philosophic inquiry, who was peculiarly fitted for the task of sifting the often conflicting opinions of military and naval experts.¹

Whatever Balfour's possible failings as a party leader and executive may have been² - he was frequently accused of an academic indecisiveness and lassitude - he could make decisions rapidly, even ruthlessly, on matters that engaged his intellect. His services were in demand by British Governments of both parties for more than half a century.

Balfour's intellectual training and great personal interest in questions of national defence lifted the discussion of British army reform to a new plane. Instead of dealing with details of organization, the reforms carried out under his administration began with first principles. This constituted nothing less than a revolution in military administration and official strategical analysis and represents the true watershed between the nineteenth century tradition of piece-meal reforms and disconnected military planning, and the modern age of analytic strategy.

Balfour's tool for effecting this strategic revolution was the Committee of Imperial Defence. Starting with an impotent Cabinet committee

1. Reginald, Lord Esher. National Strategy. 1904. pp. 8-9.

2. J.P. Macintosh. "The Role of the Committee of Imperial Defence Before 1914." English Historical Review. July 1962. pp. 494-495.

which met infrequently under the First Lord and Secretary of State for War, Balfour transformed it into a powerful and authoritative body which met under the direct supervision, and in the personal presence, of the Prime Minister. This was the body which resolved the invasion quarrel between the two services and, in fact, the invasion issue was the first to be taken up by the reconstituted Committee of Imperial Defence. This was perfectly natural: before a scheme of Imperial strategy could be constructed, it was essential to determine that the heart of Empire, London itself, was safe from attack. In order to free drafts to defend India, it was important to establish how many troops should be retained in England to defeat a possible invasion, and this number could never be known unless the entire invasion operation was exhaustively reviewed and analyzed, and estimates of the size of a possible attack established as the basis of a home defence army. The primacy of the invasion issue was recalled by Balfour more than a quarter of a century later.

... when I became Prime Minister ... I found this eternal and most important question of our safety against invasion was a subject of bitter controversy between the Services. There was no co-ordination, no co-operation between the people in charge of land and sea war, and defence.

... Uncle Robert (Salisbury) never paid any attention to these things - his mind didn't work on those questions, they didn't bite on it. It appeared to me we ought to get at the facts. After all, the safety of these Islands is a pretty heavy responsibility for Ministers ... It was obvious a Civilian Cabinet could form no judgment, and I had the idea, which was really original. I don't say that out of Conceit, - I mean simply that the Defence Committee had no precedent. It started, and it has worked admirably from the very start. We began on the particular subject - the defence of these islands.¹

The crucial ten months that led to the adoption of an official policy on invasion - February to December, 1903 - began at the second meeting of the C.I.D. on February 11, 1903. The innovation of the C.I.D. was to bring

L. B.E.L. Dugdale. Arthur James Balfour. Hutchinson, London, 1936. p. 365.

the foremost professional authorities of both services together, under their civilian directors and the Prime Minister. The resolution of the invasion question was something in the nature of a trial for the C.I.D., and it was therefore fortunate that the Committee during this initial period was remarkably stable in its personnel. During most of this period, the Duke of Devonshire served as Chairman of the Committee, although Balfour was always present. Their correspondence reveals that Devonshire was now more concerned with Cabinet issues than military reform,¹ although he had served with distinction on a number of reforming bodies in the past, notably the Hartington Commission. The Earl of Selborne, First Lord of the Admiralty, was an able administrator as well as a Blue Water zealot. He intervened personally in an attempt to cut down the powers of the Norfolk Commission,² and complained to Balfour of the complete breakdown in War Office administration, noting especially that "The chaotic state of our Militia, Yeomanry, and Volunteers is a scandal." He believed it would^{be} better to have half the numbers with some semblance of organization.³ Selborne was active in the ensuing controversy in the C.I.D. His opposite number at the War Office, St. John Brodrick, seems to have shared Selborne's department-centred prejudices, but not his breadth of outlook. His unsuccessful tenure as Secretary of State for War was now drawing to a close. Brodrick at the War Office had taken the advice of his professional subordinates on larger issues and concentrated upon administrative details. As a result of this, Brodrick echoed the ideas of the generals

1. Balfour MSS. (49770)

2. Cab 2/1 "Minutes of 21st Meeting." 15 July 1903.

3. Balfour MSS. (49707) Selborne to Balfour. 25 March 1903. f. 118.

on the invasion issue.

At the next lowest level, that of chief professional authority, disagreement also persisted. The Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Lord Roberts, had been the conquering hero of the South African War. He was now, however, 71 years of age. Always gentle in disposition and well-liked, Roberts was beginning to show a tendency to echo the views of more vigorous juniors which would mark the last decade of his long and distinguished life. The First Sea Lord, Admiral of the Fleet Lord Walter Kerr, was in a somewhat similar position; he was nearing the end of his active career, acquiesced in the official view of his service on invasion¹, and left the quarreling to the younger activists. So in the case of the first C.I.D. inquiry into invasion, the usual hierarchy reversed itself. The initiative was left to the most junior members of the C.I.D., the chiefs of Naval and Military Intelligence. Under their strong leadership, the fifteen-year-old quarrel between the Army and the Navy reached its authentic climax in a ten-month "battle of the Memoranda."

The two chief protagonists were, again, well matched. Nicholson, Director-General of Military Intelligence, was perhaps the ablest military administrator of the generation between the "Wolseley Ring" of the 1870s and 1880s and those who directed British military effort in the World War. Nicholson was suspicious of the Admiralty and all its works: he feared that the triumph of the Blue Water School would lead to a reduction in the Army Estimates and the permanent subordination of the War Office to the Admiralty.² His chief adversary in the invasion dispute was Prince

1. See Kerr's views on the 1900 invasion scare in A.J. Marder, British Naval Policy. p. 378.

2. Roberts MSS. Case X20926. Box N.2 R52/113. Nicholson to Roberts, 24 November 1903.

Louis of Battenberg, Director of Naval Intelligence (later Admiral of the Fleet, First Sea Lord, and Marquess of Milford Haven).

Though handicapped by his German ancestry and his gout, he was a first-rate, all-round seaman, a born leader, an efficient, even brilliant, tactician and strategist (he was never defeated in manoeuvres until 1912). He was also a man of high intellectual attainments, a student and a scholar, an accomplished linguist and a lover of the arts. His high-mindedness, cheerful personality, considerateness, and commanding presence - he looked the beau-ideal of the British naval officer - commended themselves to the profession.¹

The formation of the C.I.D. did not end the invasion controversy between the two services. Indeed, for a time it intensified it, and the two services soon became so involved that they both asked for, and immediately were granted, funds for additional staff to cope with the extra work thrown on the two Intelligence Departments.²

The first passage of arms between the two departments was brought about by an anonymous War Office paper of February 14 by Nicholson provocatively entitled "Provision of Land Forces for the Defence of the United Kingdom", which was answered by Battenberg two weeks later. It assumed that Admiralty policy entailed the elimination of all mobile field troops in England which, it lamented,

would leave Great Britain without any field army to repel hostile landings at any points on the coast, unprovided with fixed defences. If such a landing were effected, the enemy could only be opposed in his advance on London by withdrawing the garrisons of the naval bases, and hastily improvising a field force, the naval bases being thus left unprotected and open to capture.³

Such a vital question as the defence of the capital of the Empire should

1. A.J. Marder. From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow. Vol. I. (O.U.P.) 1961. pp. 406-07.

2. Cab 2/1 "Minutes of 11th Meeting." 29 April 1903.

3. Cab 3/1/3A "Provision of land forces for the defence of the United Kingdom." 14 February 1903. p. 2.

not be left to only 100,000 garrison troops. The existing home defence establishment provided for over half a million home defence troops - over five times this number. Besides, Admiralty policy was contradictory in this matter. Previously naval representatives had agreed that defended ports such as Portsmouth and Plymouth were open to attack, which meant landing a force of 40,000, as well as heavy artillery. If the Admiralty believed such a force might get through to Portsmouth, complete with defending naval squadron, how could they guarantee the undefended stretches of the coast from invasion?

The substitution of a few more transports for fighting ships and the elimination of heavy artillery, stores, etc. which would not be needed for the advance on London, if there were no organized British troops to bar the way, would enable an expedition of some 60,000 to 80,000 men to be landed on our southern and eastern coasts with probably no more, and possibly less, preparation than would be necessary for an attack on Portsmouth.¹

Battenberg replied on March 4th that this interpretation was "over-strained."

To clear the matter up, however, once and for all, it must be understood that, in the opinion of the Admiralty, an attack on a first-class defended home port, such as Portsmouth, involving not only bombardment by a squadron of armoured ships, but the landing of a field force with heavy artillery for the purpose of capturing the place from the land side, is as impossible as invasion in force while the fleet remains undefeated.²

Battenberg moved on to other contentious points in the War Office paper.

The Admiralty have never felt called upon to express an opinion as to the number of troops which should be maintained at home by the War Office. What they have

1. Cab 3/1/3A 14 February 1903. p. 3.

2. Cab 3/1/8A "Naval Remarks on the Military Paper, 'Provision of Land Forces for the Defence of the United Kingdom.' .." 4 March 1903. p. 1

maintained, and do maintain, is that the Navy can prevent the landing of a large force, say an army corps, but that it cannot make sure of preventing a small force, say 5,000 men, being landed somewhere.¹

The War Office had criticized the Admiralty for offering a guarantee against an invasion but not a raid, on the basis that the greater involved the lesser. Battenberg went to pains to point out that this deduction was based on "too literal an interpretation" of official Admiralty Instructions. A raid was different in quality, strategically, as well as quantity from an invasion. It could be secretly collected and embarked and could leave port easily, as the large convoy involved in invasion could not.² The War Office paper had revealed a number of misconceptions over naval strategy.

The weightiest War Office argument for invasion raised the possibility of a three-power coalition against England, which was a great concern at the time, and even taxed the confidence of the Admiralty. The hypothesis suggested was akin to that raised in the War Office by Lord Roberts:³ Britain could be involved in a Franco-Russian War when Germany would intervene in the shape of an invasion by England.

The contingency is by no means an impossible one; it is notorious that Germany views our naval power with jealousy, and that single-handed she would have no chance of destroying it. We know that plans for the invasion of England have been discussed in Germany, and deemed by some, even with our existing Home Defence Army, to be a not impossible enterprise. Germany could well afford to risk in such an enterprise 80,000 to 100,000 men, and a dash at our Eastern

1. Cab 3/1/8A. 4 March 1903. p. 1.

2. Ibid. p.2 and Cab 3/1/3A. p. 2.

3. Cab 3/1/1A. "Military Needs of the Empire in a War with France and Russia." p. 17a. Roberts, of course, raised only the possibility of French intervention in an Anglo-Russian War in India.

coast would be entirely in accord with her military traditions of rapid offence. It is believed that a very much larger tonnage of shipping would be available at the present moment in the Baltic ports than was estimated in 1892 to be available in French northern ports, when the possibility of French invasion were then examined by the Landing-Places Committee ... if the rapidly-increasing German fleet coalesced with the French and Russian navies, the task of attaining sea command would tax our naval resources to the utmost ... if we had no field army for home defence, the Government would be forced either to buy Germany's forbearance at any price, or to run the risk of national disaster.¹

It is significant that the first paper submitted to the C.I.D. on the invasion contingency should raise the possibility of a hostile Germany. Although the bulk of the early C.I.D. discussion centred on France or a Franco-Russian alliance (until 1907), both the Admiralty and War Office had already begun, as has been seen, to take the measure of Germany as a potential invader. The very passage quoted was in fact a précis of a more exhaustive 11-page study by Lt. Col. William Robertson of Military Intelligence, completed on 7 February 1903,² but not brought to the notice of the C.I.D. until a year later. Battenberg's reply to this threat was straight from the Blue Water text. If the danger of invasion had increased, what was required was more ships. The Two Power Standard would have to come under review. As the Colombes had said, what was required was a massive increase in the fleet, not an augmentation of military force on shore.³

The War Office in closing had reverted to the public opinion argument: the Admiralty's policy would have a depressing "moral effect

1. Cab 3/1/3A. pp. 3-4.

2. Cab 3/1/20A. "The Military Resources of Germany, and Probable Methods of their Employment in a War between Germany and England." by W.R. Robertson. 7 February 1903. printed by C.I.D. 23 February 1904.

3. Cab 3/1/8A. p. 2.

on the public mind," and might induce a state of complacency regarding invasion.

It is impossible, therefore, to imagine that, if war with France and Russia should find us without any organised field army, and with only 150,000 men under arms in England, public opinion would be content with the Admiralty's guarantee that the Home Squadron would protect England from what the Duke of Wellington termed the 'tragedy' of a successful invasion. The public would picture to themselves, as Lord Palmerston did in considering this question, 'the state this country would be in with London occupied by an enemy's army; the Court and the Government put to flight; the Public Departments in the hands of an enemy; the banks plundered; the merchants under contribution; the public stores destroyed.'¹

However "ill-founded this alarm", stated the War Office, it would soon reach a pitch that would subordinate all other Governmental considerations. Battenberg replied that the Admiralty were "not at all insensible" to this argument. "It is all a matter of degree." It was inconceivable that a modern British Government should go to the length of their predecessors at the height of the Napoleonic invasion scare of a century before. The 700,000 men collected at this time had not been assembled solely due to the clamour of the public, for the Government were dealing on a worldwide scale with the conqueror of Europe, who had been making exhaustive preparations for the conquest of England for some time.² Battenberg's implication was that it was unlikely that a similar situation would soon arise, and certainly not without ample forewarning.

In its conclusion, the War Office had admitted the necessity of a fleet powerful enough to retain command of the sea, and the folly of

1. Cab 3/1/3A. p. 4.

2. Cab 3/1/8A. p. 2.

organising a home army on the Continental scale. Yet an efficient home army to act as an insurance policy if "some temporary check or unforeseen emergency" arose was necessary. New measures of proper training, organisation, and mobility, as well as correct proportion of various arms, especially mounted infantry, were required.

In view of the length of our coast line and the many points at which a landing might be effected, it is possible that the enemy's force might be subdivided into a number of different columns, all directed on landing to concentrate on a specified point. To meet such a form of attack the power of rapid movement and concentration on the part of the defending troops would be essential ...¹

The War Office recommended that a large number of Imperial Yeomanry be raised to supplement the existing cavalry forces allotted to home defence. If the force could be made more efficient, it could be reduced. The very vital question that had not yet been raised by either department was that of numbers: how large should be the force to deter invasion? What was first required, again, was to establish a hypothetical scale of attack, and a scale of defence: how many invaders could be expected and how many would be required to defeat them?

The C.I.D. took steps towards the solution of this problem at its third meeting on February 18th, when the Committee resolved

That the military authorities should draw up a Statement showing what is the smallest and most lightly equipped force with which an enemy would have undertaken (a) a landing in England with a view to the occupation of London at a time when this country was most denuded of its regular land forces during the greatest stress of the South African War in the beginning of 1900.²

The wording of the resolution is significant, for it established a number of precedents that would be followed in all future C.I.D.

1. Cab 3/1/3A. p. 5.

2. Cab 2/1. "Minutes of 3rd Meeting." 18 February 1903.

inquiries into invasion. First, the C.I.D. assumed circumstances as unfavourable as possible to Britain, adopting 1900 as the reference point, the acknowledged low point of British capacity for resistance against invasion. The emphasis upon the "smallest and most lightly equipped force" possible was another important precedent. This showed the influence of the Colombes, who had long argued that for purposes of secrecy, concealment, evasion, and quick landing, that the smallest possible effective force would be the one employed. Wolseley and other military alarmists had named large numbers with scant consideration of what was operationally possible. These two assumptions were to govern Governmental considerations of the invasion contingency for the next fifteen years.

The War Office's reply was produced by Nicholson on February 28, was sombre, if not despairing, in tone. Nicholson took March 1900 as his frame of reference, when only 17,000 Regulars remained in the home islands to stiffen some 354,000 ill-trained, poorly-organized and scattered Auxiliary Forces. No properly constituted staff for a home field army had then existed, nor were there trained officers available to improvise one. Had an invasion occurred, equipment could have been purchased only from civilian sources. It would have taken at least two weeks to organize the home army, and a month to provide it with transport and personnel, to make it a fully mobile force. Even then, it would have been made up of inexperienced and poorly-trained troops, an untrained staff, greatly deficient in mounted troops and engineers, and dangerously weak in artillery. Only the 17,000 Regulars would have been capable of repelling invasion: "The remainder of the 371,000 would have been a mere mob of armed, but imperfectly trained, men lacking all military cohesion, or power of movement."¹ It could certainly be assumed that these facts

1. Cab 3/1/7A. "Liability of United Kingdom to French Invasion during the South African War." 28 February 1903. p.4. Cab 2/1 "Minutes of 6th (see p.21)

were known to the French General Staff, and that the General entrusted with the task of conquering England knew that "a sudden dash immediately after, or if possible before, the actual declaration of war would give the best chance of success" as it would be vitally important to strike before a field army could be organized in England. The French General could afford to be content with but a small proportion of cavalry and artillery, and to trust for his supplies to the food carried in the men's knapsacks supplemented by requisitions on the country.¹

Nicholson, in his description of the possible attack, with its complete lack of reference to British sea-power and its evocation of a French "flying column" without supplies rushing on London, was in the true tradition of nineteenth-century War Office alarmism. He went on to argue, on the basis of an 1888 paper by Ardagh, that 75,000 horses, and 300 guns could have been landed on the morning of the fifteenth day of French mobilisation. In support of this contention, he quoted the views of the military members of the Landing Places Committee and the British Naval Attaché in China, who in a report of July 1900 had estimated that 20,000 men and "warlike stores of moderate weight" could be embarked at a single port in one day. Nicholson stated that if the weather and strategic conditions were favourable - he made no direct reference to naval strategy - 70,000 men and 150 guns could be conveyed across the Channel in less than a fortnight, long before the home army was organized and concentrated, and two weeks before the defenders would have mobility and supply trains.²

The second round in the debate between the services opened with a

1. (contd. from p. 211) Meeting." 11 May 1903.

1. Ibid. p. 5.

2. Ibid.

weighty ten page paper written by Battenberg, designed to outline the naval dimension of the invasion operation, which had been so conspicuously absent in the invasion scenarios of Nicholson and the War Office. Battenberg picked up the suggestion in an earlier War Office paper that England might be outnumbered by enemy battleships in home waters by a three power alliance. The situation would then be serious, he admitted, but real danger would arise only if Britain lost all her seapower altogether, for as long as a British naval force still existed, enemy battleships would be involved in masking it, and would therefore not be available to escort the invasion armada, which would be open to attack by British small craft.

Even conceding that British superiority in battleships was lost, Battenberg advanced two powerful arguments for the Navy case. He first set about to demolish the military's assumption that all technical advances worked for the benefit of the aggressor. Technology, he asserted, really aided the defender. Steam power, for example, although it made passage of the Channel quicker, also enabled the defenders to respond quickly and concentrate their forces with certainty. Napoleon could have had his invading hosts rowed ashore while the defending British squadrons lay becalmed and helpless, but an analogous situation had now been rendered impossible by the predictability and speed of steam vessels. Other developments also redounded to the benefit of the defence. Rapid concentration of naval forces, made possible by steam, was further augmented by the telegraph and by the recent implementation of wireless. Likewise, the development of quick-firing guns and the new-found efficiency and accuracy of the Whitehead torpedo gave a new offensive power to small vessels which would prove especially effective against anchored transports at night. It

was certain that no power could land 70,000 men with full field equipment in the daylight hours of one day. Likewise, a heterogeneous collection of transports could not move safely at night, and its concealment would be impossible. The transports could be attacked on sailing or after dark, and in the conditions of calm required for the landing, the defenders could use vessels, too small, slow, or obsolete for other operations. Once a mêlée began, the powerful enemy escorts could not intervene against British small craft darting about amidst the French transports, for fear of hitting their own boats and men. ¹

Battambang's second main argument therefore was based on the strength of Britain's second line of naval defence, assuming that the first line - the battleships - were no longer a factor. Britain, he stated, had 475 Torpedo Boats available, many of which were admittedly converted civilian small craft. But it was unlikely that this large number would be appreciably reduced in a possible war by naval actions, as they were defensive vessels, and thus would remain as a considerable deterrent. The invading force would further suffer from submarine attacks, whose value could be exactly estimated owing to manoeuvres and experiments. The submarines' main difficulty was to maintain a good view of a moving enemy, as well as a limited radius of action. But neither of these disadvantages would operate in actions against anchored transports. In these conditions, submarines would be even more effective in attack than torpedo boats, for they were invisible on the surface and could therefore attack in broad daylight.

Cruisers would presumably also remain, and in this category Britain had a predominance of 82 craft to the 25 of France and Russia combined, not

¹ Cab 3/1/11A. "Memorandum on the Possibilities of Invasion during Temporary Loss of the Sea in Home Waters." N.I.D. 31 March 1903. p. 2. 19.

to mention the natural advantages of a heterogeneous force with unified command. All these secondary forces combined could give a good account of themselves even against the first-line forces of France and Russia.

... if our adversaries made up their minds to attempt invasion they would be compelled to use their battleships to convoy the transports, whether there was other and more useful work for the battleships or not. And then our great opportunity would come. These battleships having for a time gained an advantage would now be most unwisely and unnecessarily running a great chance of losing it, by exposing themselves to risks of a nature they would hesitate to face under any other conditions, for it is not, of course, to be supposed that the torpedo craft would confine their attention to the transports.¹

The Navy would have three possible options open to them in attacking a Franco-Russian convoy: Torpedo Boats, lying in or near the Channel; Destroyers, lying off enemy embarkation ports, whose speed would be a decisive factor in forming defensive concentrations, and cruisers, none of which would be outside wireless range or further than 24 hours' recall from the Channel, as the previous British defeat would have brought them into home waters.

Battenberg's conclusion was according to the Blue Water text.

The risks to an enemy involved in an attempt at invasion would consist, in the first place, of the practical certainty of an appalling loss of life by the sinking of transports, and, in the second place, of a possible reduction of their battle fleet by undue exposure to torpedo attack, whereby they might throw away the sea command temporarily in their hands. It might be that they would elect to face these risks, in which case they would almost certainly fail to effect their ultimate object: but it is much more probable that they would choose the less hazardous, and, according to M. Pelletan's views, equally efficacious policy of endeavouring to cut off our food supplies ... Until this has been effected, invasion will be difficult and dangerous, if not impossible, and after this it will be superfluous.²

At the C.I.D. meeting of April 29th, Lord Roberts read a critique of Battenberg's paper which had been prepared by Military Intelligence.³ The

1. Cab 3/1/11A. W.I.D. 31 March 1903. p. 3.

2. Ibid. pp. 3-4.

3. Cab 2/1 "Minutes of 11th Meeting." 29 April 1903.

soldiers were extremely critical of ^{the}/D.N.I.'s hypotheses , especially his assumption that Royal Navy losses would be restricted to Battleships. It would be more logical, asserted the War Office, if the losses were extended to British cruisers, torpedo boats, and destroyers as well. If there had been a struggle for command of the sea, all these forces would have been thrown into that struggle. It would have been bad strategy not to employ all available naval forces in such a crisis, and if they had been employed, a certain number would surely have been sunk. The military felt Battenberg's argument had not been clear; if Britain remained superior in cruisers and destroyers, they argued, it could hardly be said, save in a restricted sense, that she had lost command of the sea, for "Hitherto sea command has been understood to imply general naval superiority, and not merely superiority in battleships." In addition, the 82/25 ratio could not be guaranteed: commerce protection in a Franco-Russian War would use up many cruisers and as the war progressed, unforeseen demands might further reduce cruiser strength in home waters.

Admiralty policy regarding the defence of the home islands seemed hardly logical to Military Intelligence. The army paradoxically was made responsible at the Admiralty's request for protecting naval bases, which duty could surely be carried out by the Navy; yet the Admiralty rejected the cooperation of the Army in guarding and protecting lengths of coastline where there were no large concentrations of naval power.

Surely it would facilitate offensive action on the part of the Navy if the Admiralty could rest assured that, were it desirable temporarily to weaken our naval force in home waters in order to strike a decisive blow elsewhere, the invasion of England would be repelled by a sufficiently strong and efficient land force. It is therefore submitted that the Admiralty go out of their way to increase the enormous responsibilities which would devolve upon them in the event of war. Even now these responsibilities

seem to exceed the available means for meeting them ... This being so, it seems reasonable to inquire whether in the matter of home defence the army cannot supplement naval action and thus give the navy a freer hand ...¹

This "freeing of hands" or "unshackled fleet" argument had been staple War Office ammunition in the previous decade and a half of debate with the Blue Water School, but it arose from a misconception of naval strategy. According to the naval strategists, the Fleet's duty was to find, and then to destroy the enemy's capital fleet. Once the Royal Navy was in touch with the enemy, invasion was impossible, as no responsible Government would send a fleet of unarmed transports to invade England without a powerful escort of war-ships. To the Blue Water mind, the War Office argument was based on the false premise that the Navy must stay, immobilized, close to the British shore. Battenberg had already dealt with this misconception on the part of the military, but apparently without effect, saying:

It must be pointed out that the Admiralty have no intention, under any circumstances, of stationing our ships in a strong chain of observation round our coasts, as is here assumed. Such a disposition of naval forces would be as futile as the chain of Martello Towers formerly maintained round our coasts.²

The incident underlines the inability of intelligent soldiers to come to terms with naval strategy, and to grasp the implications of sea-power.³

Later in April, new and authoritative opinions from a very unusual source became available, for the C.I.D. translated and printed an article from an official German naval magazine, Marine Rundschau, which strongly

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1. Cab 3/1/13A. "Remarks on the Memorandum Prepared by the Naval Intelligence Department ..." I.D.W.O. 27 April 1903. p.2.
 2. Cab 3/1/8A. p. 2. Martello Towers were light-house type structures erected during the Napoleon invasion scare to serve as mounts for artillery. Most of them never fired a shot in anger.
 3. Cab 2/1. "Minutes of 11th meeting." 29 April 1903.

reinforced the Admiralty case. The article noted the spate of conjectures in Continental journals dealing with the invasion of England, but professed that any such thought lay far from the thoughts of Germany". Because some such articles had appeared in the German press, the anonymous article had expressed concern lest this talk engender ill-feeling between England and Germany and foster the "mistaken view" that the increase in the German fleet was directed against England.

In German, as well as in certain British circles, it was in the official interest to deflate the "invasion peril", which explains why the highest advisory committee on British defence should trouble to translate, print, and distribute an extremely technical treatise which exhaustively discussed all stages involved in an invasion of England. The German writer went through the entire invasion operation step by step, and his methods and conclusions had a profound effect in the future studies of the C.I.D. Point by point, the German article dismantled the invasion myth. He began by echoing Battenberg's arguments about steam power: England, following Clausewitz, would place her force at just the decisive strategic point. The contention that the operation could be carried out "with the speed of lightning" as well as surprise, was discarded. The Marine Rundschau declared, with all the confidence and exactitude of German science, that

in these days of rapid intercourse, with the whole world girdled by telegraph cables, with the excellent news agencies everywhere, and with a due appreciation of the English cruisers, any idea of surprise may be dismissed as chimerical ... In fact, we may confidently assert that any contemplated undertaking at all proportionate to the requirements of an invasion of England would now-a-days cast its shadow for weeks in advance over the whole world and would consequently give the British Empire sufficient time to thoroughly organize its counter-measures both afloat and ashore.¹

1. Cab 3/1/12A. "The Feasibility of Oversea Invasion." April 1903. p. 3. Two paragraphs were merged in the quotation.

Even assuming that the great armada could be secretly assembled, the remaining deterrents to invasion were, in complexity and in magnitude, appalling.

A mere glance at the great length of the English coast-line, with its strongly fortified harbours, or points d'appui at Plymouth, Portland, Portsmouth, Dover and the Thames, is quite enough to show what a gigantic task would be imposed upon a fleet which would not only have to convoy and protect an immense, unwieldy number of transports, but also to blockade all the points mentioned, for unless they were strictly blockaded the fleet of transports would inevitably be exposed to heavy losses.¹

Absolute sea command was indispensable for an appreciable period, but, owing to modern developments, this was nearly impossible to attain. Manoeuvres, presumably German, had shown the difficulty of guarding against torpedo boat attack, and the greater speed, handiness, and freedom of movement of modern warships all tended to aid the attack. The German writer had asked:

How then is this danger to be avoided by a fleet of transports which is made up of a hundred, or more, hastily-collected ships, more especially when these ships are commanded by officers who are necessarily more or less unaccustomed to fleet sailing ... 100 transports, even if they could be formed in four columns, say, which seems impracticable, would extend over a length of 5 nautical miles. What a number of cruisers and torpedo-boats would be required to guard them! 2

If the convoy were attacked, the transports would suffer an unhappy fate, fleeing in a disorganised fashion back to Germany at a top speed of 12 knots, to ports that were peculiarly difficult to enter, even singly.

Embarkation likewise was considered an impossible operation by the potential German enemy, who automatically assumed that a landing would be opposed by British forces on land and sea. The writer questioned whether naval gunnery would clear the shores for the invading army, especially if

1. Cab 3/1/12A. April 1903. p. 4.

2. Ibid.

the defenders were properly hidden and made full use of natural cover. This was not the only deterrent.

Any one who knows anything of the construction of a modern cargo steamer, and of the time which it takes to unload her in dock, where all facilities for the purpose are at hand, will be ready to admit that the landing of an army of 100,000 men on an open coast is not a mere job measured by hours.¹

It was instead a matter of days.

The boats, crowded with troops, would have to traverse the zone of the enemy's fire without being able to reply to it with effect, and they would offer a mark which it would be almost impossible to miss; the troops would consequently suffer tremendously from the concentrated fire of guns and rifles, and especially from machine rifle-calibre guns; in fact, they would be in much the same plight as close columns advancing in the open against an unshaken enemy ... The experience of peace manoeuvres almost everywhere goes to show that a landing in face of the enemy's fire is an impossibility.²

This had been verified by war experience in Cuba and the Transvaal. Yet the German hypothesis continued. A hundred thousand invaders were assumed to have gotten ashore. Even so, their problems were far from solved: they had neither numerical superiority nor security of communications. They would have to fight against superior odds while living in a country dependent upon imports for food supplies. Even if London were captured, the invaders according to Clausewitz and the experience of 1870-71, would then have to anticipate a people's war. English national character and all of English history pointed to a long and spirited resistance, even if invasion were somehow successful.³

This intervention from an unexpected and apparently objective source, invested moreover with all the prestige and authority of German military opinion, had a salutary effect upon the C.I.D. invasion inquiry. No new

1. Cab 3/1/12A. April 1903. p. 5.

2. Ibid. p. 6.

3. Ibid. p. 7.

papers were brought before the Committee for the next 11 weeks and the Committee turned to other matters, chiefly the defence of India. The trend of thought within the C.I.D. was clearly indicated by the fact that invasion had now been dismissed as the first priority. This was at least partially due to the force and comprehensiveness of the remarkable German article. It has not proven possible to discover the individual responsible for bringing the article before the C.I.D., for the C.I.D. at this time had no separate secretariat. But there is strong circumstantial evidence pointing to Battenberg. The German-born Director of Naval Intelligence would surely have known of the article in the official German naval magazine which so persuasively echoed his own case against the invasion contingency.

The effect of this paper on the C.I.D. was reinforced by a second memorandum. On June 25, 1903 the C.I.D. printed the massive 67 page study completed by Lt. Col. E.A. Altham of Military Intelligence covering the "Military Needs of the Empire in a War with France and Russia." Characteristically, the C.I.D. postponed the discussion on the first section dealing with home defence, and dealt with other matters of Imperial defence for the next three meetings.¹ Altham's paper shed new light on the interservice invasion controversy, for it revealed that the Blue Water School was not without its supporters even in the War Office. Altham, in his survey of world military requirements and suggestions for an Imperial strategy, moved in the Blue Water tradition. But his starting-point had been home defence, and he thus had anticipated the method of the C.I.D. by two years. He began

1. Cab 2/1 "Minutes of the 18th ... 19th ... (and) 20th Meetings."
25 June 1903. 2 July 1903. 15 July 1903.

if the heart of the Empire fall into the enemy's grasp, its existence must cease, and our first care must, therefore, be for the heart. Home defence, therefore, is the primary problem to be solved. The main factor to determine(..is ..) the strength of the attack to which these islands are liable.¹

Altham reviewed the history of the interservice controversy since 1888, stressing

of these two very divergent views the War Office had adhered to its own in the scheme for the general defence of the United Kingdom. The main outlines of this scheme were ... drawn up and accepted by the military authorities before any consultation with the Admiralty had taken place, and have since remained unchanged, notwithstanding the Admiralty's expression of opinion.²

This policy had been consistent for the last fifteen years.

Brodrick's Army Scheme now proposed to increase the Home Defence Force even further. The Yeomanry were to be increased by 23,000 and the Volunteers by 110,000. Brodrick's goal was to have 700,000 available for Home Defence at the outbreak of war: of this number nearly 575,000 were to be available exclusively for defence against invasion. This contrasted with the existing establishment of 335,000, and promised a great expenditure at a time when the public was becoming increasingly critical of large Army Estimates, and skeptical over the possibility of invasion. Altham asked:

Is this force inadequate or excessive? ... It is probably inadequate in numbers, and certainly inadequate in organization and efficiency, to meet the enormous force of regular troops which France could pour into this country, if we permanently lost the command of the Channel. But the country has deliberately and rightly decided to maintain such a navy as will make such a loss of command impossible, and so long as that policy is adhered to, it would be folly to lay upon the country the financial burden of an enormous home army, adapted only to meet a contingency which will not arise, and unavailable for the probable needs of the Empire. Moreover, the conditions of the

1. Cab 3/1/1A. p. 9.

2. Ibid. p. 12.

food supply of the nation are such that it is absolutely certain that if we lose sea command, however large a home army we maintain, we shall be starved into surrender, without the landing of a single French soldier on our shores.¹

When this document came to the notice of the C.I.D. in June, 1903, it became obvious that War Office opinion on invasion was not as unanimous and monolithic as Nicholson's and Roberts' activities had led them to believe.

Altham noted that the current War Office arrangements against invasion were based on the statements of the military members of the Landing Places Committee in 1892: that France would have 21 days free of serious interference from the Royal Navy in which to land three or four Army Corps. This hypothesis had come under strong condemnation by the Admiralty at the time, and it also appeared to be superseded by the Joint Conference on Raids which had met on December 18, 1900. If the fundamental policy of the Admiralty was to keep a sufficient force in home waters to ensure command of the sea, a naval attack or landing seemed unlikely: Altham stressed that

These general principles have been approved by both Admiralty and War Office, and this approval appears to close the controversy between the two Departments ... it seems difficult to contend that ... it is necessary to maintain in this country throughout in war with a Maritime Power an additional 500,000 men solely for the possibility of meeting an invasion in force ... even if we reject the Admiralty view as to the uselessness of seriously considering the possibility of such a contingency, its probability will very greatly diminish, and almost disappear, as soon as the enemy's squadrons have been destroyed or chased into port and blockaded.²

His implication was that the risk of invasion was restricted to the opening weeks of a war against France and Russia.

He revealed himself as more than a purely military analyst when he drew a necessary distinction between invasion as a strategical problem, and

1. Cab 3/1/1A. pp. 16-17.

2. Ibid. p. 17.

invasion as a political issue. He suggested that the Volunteers served as a damper on public panic.

It cannot be ignored, however, that, even after our sea supremacy had been established, there would be considerable public anxiety, if this country were denuded of all troops except those needed as garrisons of the defended ports and Ireland: but it must be remembered that at the very first sign of war with France the military spirit of this country would be greatly roused, and the national home defence force, whatever form or organization it may take in the future, would be rapidly swelled by a great influx of the best of the best of the manhood of the country. Although, from lack of training, this increase could not be relied on, in a military sense, to resist invasion, yet ... the addition to our forces thus attained may be reckoned on as sufficing to allay the national anxiety, and thus setting free the offensive force.¹

The real rule of the home defence force would be to free the offensive force of Regulars for overseas wars. Roberts had here raised the possibility of the offensive force being sent before invasion threatened, suggesting that

Our Quarrel might, in the first instance, be with Russia, necessitating troops being sent to India, and while they were employed there France might attempt an invasion.²

Nicholson, unknown to the C.I.D., had written to Roberts in 1901 regarding this very possibility. Had his words become known they would have further undermined the War Office case for the seriousness of invasion, for Nicholson had used the Admiralty argument to put Roberts' mind to rest on this point.

there is much in what your Lordship says about France joining in after the War with Russia had begun. On the other hand, the Naval Authorities hold that, so long as we are Superior at Sea, the invasion of England is so improbable, that it hardly comes within the range of practical politics. And if we are inferior at sea, we shall have to come to terms, invasion or no invasion, on account of our food supply.³

1. Cab 3/1/1A. p. 17.

2. Ibid. p. 17n.

3. Roberts MSS. Case X20926. Box N.2 R52/98. Nicholson to Roberts. 4 Sept. 1901.

Yet Nicholson was now combating this very argument tooth and nail, not out of any considerations of strategy, but as a matter of departmental pre-eminence.

Altham had concluded that only 350,000 (instead of 594,000) were required for home defence, and suggested that these be organized into a mobile army of three Corps. This would set free 245,000 of the present establishment of 594,000 for overseas requirements. The new Home Defence Army Altham recommended would be limited to 200,000 for garrisons for defended ports, and 150,000 for a Mobile Army. He concluded that "Our present system has the radical defect of being over-concerned with purely insular defence to the flagrant neglect of vital factors, such as the defence of India and Egypt, and the power of striking effective blows at the enemy."¹ Altham's paper was warmly endorsed by both Nicholson and Roberts. Nicholson commended it as the first major contribution of Military Intelligence to the evolution of an imperial strategy, saying it was "as far as I know, the first serious attempt to deal in a comprehensive manner with the problems of meeting the gravest military danger to which our nation is exposed."² Roberts was even more specific: the paper indicated that "the force for home defence seems in excess of our requirements": he commended Altham for emphasizing offensive action "instead of confining ourselves to the passive defence of the United Kingdom."³

The appearance of Altham's paper at the C.I.D. meeting of June 25, 1903 seriously undermined the position of Roberts and Nicholson. Here

1. Cab 3/1/1A. p. 49.

2. Ibid. p. 3 Nicholson to Roberts. 15 August 1901.

3. Ibid. p. 5 Roberts to St. John Brodrick. 17 October 1901.

was a long and authoritative alternate world strategy, which they themselves had originated, fostered, and recommended not two years before. Altham's paper, as well as the invasion article from Marine Bundschau, brought about a changed atmosphere in the C.I.D. regarding invasion. The military authorities could now be quoted against themselves from Altham's paper, which was designated Paper 1-A in the C.I.D. file on home defence. Revised priorities, if not the foregone conclusion of the Committees, are evident after June 25th. The discussion on invasion was adjourned for the next two meetings to deal with matters of imperial defence. At the third meeting, the discussion was resumed, after it was announced that it would be "assumed for the purpose of the present discussion, ^{that} an invasion in force need not be taken into account."¹ A paper was produced by the War Office comparing the "establishments of military forces with war requirements" in Home Defence, as a preliminary to reshaping the home army. This revealed that over 31,000 Regular troops were allotted to the field force as defenders against invasion. The C.I.D. discussed at the possibility of reducing this force in size, and the War Office was prevailed upon and "undertook to subject the figures of the Auxiliary Forces to a fresh scrutiny."²

The C.I.D. meeting the following week (July 15) continued the discussion on whether invasion need seriously to be taken into account. Various situations severely unfavourable to Britain were examined,

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1. Cab 2/1 "Minutes of 20th Meeting." 8 July 1903.
 2. Cab³/1/15A. "Home Defence: Comparison of Establishments of Military Forces with War requirements (exclusive of native troops)." 7 July 1903. Cab 2/1 "Minutes of 20th Meeting." 8 July 1903.

including "severe naval reverses, decoying away of our battleships, absence of our cruisers guarding the trade routes, and losses in our fleet of destroyers and submarines."¹ It is significant that the discussion was now conducted solely in terms of naval strategy. This was a process begun earlier when Nicholson had followed the Admiralty into detailed consideration of possible future naval dispositions. But in so doing, he had at least acquiesced in the Admiralty's first premise that invasion was solely a naval question. His tacit surrender on this point marked a departure in the inter-service debate that cut off the War Office's retreat.

The debate between the two departments was again fanned into life by another paper by Battenberg, printed on July 14th, which defined "Sea Command" as

the power to move squadrons of all classes of ships freely at sea on the assumption that an enemy cannot prevent such a proceeding. If the battleships on either side are driven off the sea, that side loses the Sea Command for the time, as these battleships have lost their freedom of movement.²

This did not mean that all enemy ships were driven off the seas, for these might continue to operate as single units. An absolutely clean sweep of the seas was never attained, and it was unlikely that it ever would be. Even after Trafalgar, hostile frigates and small craft had often evaded British ships. Having hopefully settled this question, Battenberg returned to the misconceptions involved in the War Office "freeing of hands" argument. Here again he offered a decisive criticism based on sea power.

1. Cab 2/1 "Minutes of 21st Meeting." 15 July 1903.

2. Cab 3/1/16A. "The Possibilities of Invasion during Temporary Loss of Command of the Sea in Home Waters: Remarks on M.I.D. Paper 13A." 14 July 1903. p. 1.

Even if it was allowed that a large home army would give greater freedom of action to the home fleet, it is obvious that a second home fleet would answer this purpose even better if the money is to be spent, and would probably cost less, because ... a fleet left behind as a guard in such a case would only have to be sufficiently large to deal with a few cruisers, whereas a home army would have to be large enough to meet a great Continental land force ... it is - and forever must be - impossible to substitute an army for a fleet ... To represent the Army as a supplement to the Navy in the present instance, just as the Navy is to the Army, is erroneous. Although there are many cases in which the services have to render mutual assistance, each has, in addition, a sphere of its own into which the other can never enter, and to provide a home army to resist a great maritime invasion from the Continent would be much the same thing as to station a squadron of His Majesty's ships in Bombay Harbour to resist a Russian invasion of the Indian frontier.¹

This rather authoritative-sounding advice did not daunt the War Office, however, for their rejoinder, printed ten days later, observed that this seemed "to furnish an incomplete answer to the question propounded by the C.I.D." After a series of rather convoluted arguments designed to show that cruisers, destroyers, and torpedo boats might not be available in sufficient numbers to halt invasion, Military Intelligence shifted its case for invasion on to a new and ingenious ground. Both services had agreed at the 1900 Conference that a raid was possible: was not a massive raid possible? During a temporary loss of sea command, the soldiers asserted,

... an invasion of the United Kingdom would resemble a raid on a large scale, its objective presumably being London instead of one or more of the principal naval bases ... it is not contended that a foreign occupation of London would be more than a temporary incident ... but a blow would have been struck at the centre of the national life, from which it might take us many years to recover.²

1. Cab 3/1/16A. 14 July 1903. p. 2.

2. Cab 3/1/17A. "Remarks on 'The Possibilities of Invasion during Temporary Loss of Command of the Sea in Home Waters'." ID.W.O., 24 July 1903. p.2.

This was nothing more than the invasion myth now re-clothed in the more respectable robes of a raid. But even in its reply to the Admiralty, Military Intelligence gave further evidence that it had accepted the Admiralty case, perhaps without realising it. The M.I.D. returned to the 1901 position of Altham and now argued for a large home army, not primarily as a force against invasion, but as a force-in-being to "give greater freedom of action to the home fleet during the struggle for naval predominance", but, more importantly, as a reservoir for expeditionary forces to meet attacks on British possessions overseas. Perhaps unconsciously, the War Office had capitulated, for this had been the role of the army visualized by Blue Water strategists for the last ten years. This the M.I.D. now accepted:

To say that a home army would have to be large enough to meet a great continental land force is to ignore the element of time. Permanent or even prolonged loss of command of the sea in home waters has never been contemplated.¹

The claim now being made, it was said, was more modest: a measure of precaution which would deal with the limited force of an enemy could land if sea command were lost briefly and temporarily. The major War Office argument now had shifted to a plan for a large army to meet Imperial commitments. The War Office abandoned its arguments on behalf of a mass invasion, but, at the same time, had broadened its strategic scope to embrace the Empire. But this brought no armistice with the Admiralty, for although invasion was abandoned, the same struggle was now extended for predominance on a world-wide scale.

... it is contended, first, that, until decisive sea command has been obtained, the navy by itself may not be able to safeguard all ports of the Empire against over-sea attack; and,

1. Cab 3/1/17A. 24 July 1903. p. 2.

secondly, that during a naval struggle, when it may be desirable to weaken our naval forces in one quarter in order to attain decisive superiority in another, the presence of adequate land forces may to an appreciable extent relieve the navy, for the time being, from the 'responsibility of providing for the protection of all British territory at home and abroad against organized attack by sea.'¹

That the Admiralty had been over-zealous in accepting responsibilities was certainly a valid and effective argument. The problem was that it was not pertinent to the issue under discussion: the defence of England against overseas attack. For even if the Royal Navy was not equal to all tasks, it was certain that the one duty it would perform with competence and concern was the defence of the home island. The War Office's sudden volte-face and apparent recognition of this fact in mid-memorandum is additional proof that it was not motivated by strategic concern primarily, but rather by a desire to keep the size and power of the army undiminished, if not augmented.

Balfour realized that agreement had fleetingly been reached between the two services, and he intervened in an effort to make this permanent. At the August 5th meeting of the C.I.D., the last before the summer recess of the Committee, it was announced that he would draw up a paper over the holidays "recording the progress of the discussions up to the point which had now been reached." As a further indication of the trend in the C.I.D., a letter was sent to the Norfolk Commission which laid down provisional strengths for the Auxiliary Forces as 100,000 Militia and 200,000 Volunteers.²

1. Cab 3/1/17A. 24 July 1903. p. 3.

2. Cab 2/1 "Minutes of 22nd Meeting." 5 August 1903.
Cab 38/3/65 "Letter to Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers." 5 August 1903.

The C.I.D. next convened, three-and-a-half months later, on November 18th. It became obvious that Balfour had gone far beyond his original brief. His 17 page "Draft Report on the possibility of serious invasion..." was designed as a definitive policy pronouncement which would resolve the dispute with finality. The interval, though, had brought not only a hardening in Balfour's attitude, but certain subtle shifts in personnel and attitude. Following the resignation of the Duke of Devonshire from the Committee in September, Balfour had become Chairman, as well as the motivating political power behind the C.I.D. At the same time Brodrick, who believed in invasion, had been replaced as Secretary of State for War by Hugh Oakley Arnold-Forster, an ardent partisan of Blue Water doctrine previously employed as Financial Secretary to the Admiralty. Arnold-Forster's coming to the War Office coincided also with a change of front on the part of Lord Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief. After their first official talk on October 27, Arnold-Forster found that Roberts

now inclines to the view that invasion on a large scale may not be anticipated. Putting himself in the position of a Commanding Officer of an invading force, he cannot perceive how the difficulties he would have could be overcome. This is a great step in the right direction. I spoke to him at length as to the power and value of the Submarine. He told me that he had been impressed by what Admiral Noel had told him with regard to the power of the Destroyer, even in very rough weather.¹

Roberts' conversion, obviously arising from the C.I.D. debate, and the replacement of Brodrick with Arnold-Forster, perceptibly altered the balance of forces in the C.I.D. Nicholson was now the only remaining protagonist of the invasion possibility.

The new atmosphere of general accord in the Committee provided a

1. Arnold-Forster MSS(50355) 27 October 1903.

sympathetic audience to Balfour's invasion memorandum, which represented the first direct intervention in British defence policy by a Prime Minister since Salisbury's Cabinet inquiry into invasion in 1888, which provided Balfour with several useful precedents. To Balfour's reflective mind, it was evident that much of the controversy arose from imprecise terminology: the lack of definition in the word "invasion". The word, he pointed out, could describe anything from the landing of "a boat's crew to burn a village" to "three divisions in Kent". His first step towards resolving the dispute was to give the word a more precise definition, and less emotional content, by associating it with a concrete scale of attack. Balfour adopted the Blue Water view: henceforth invasion in official discussion would by definition refer exclusively to a massive blow struck at London, the heart of the Empire, either to end a war at once or as a mortal blow to British war effort. All lesser attacks would be dealt with separately.

Assuming London as the objective, the next problem was to establish the probable scale of attack: how few troops would be required to successfully conquer the United Kingdom?

For clearly the enemy's difficulty does not lie in accumulating men and material on his own side of the water, but in transferring them to ours. And every additional soldier, still more every additional horse and every additional gun, deemed necessary for the success of his military operations in England, increases the obstacles to his getting there.¹

The number of invaders depended on the enemy's attitude to losses and on the size of the defending army. Here Balfour made assumptions most unfavourable to the British case: that the enemy would be prepared to sacrifice the entire expedition in the hope of ending an Anglo-French

1. Cab 3/1/18A. "Draft Report on the Possibility of Serious Invasion."
11 November 1903. p. 4.

Imperial War and that British home forces would be at the rock-bottom level of March 1900. This was the worst possible situation for Britain, far worse than any reality, for the home army would never be reduced to this level if it appeared likely that sea command was in question. The situation outlined would have been possible only on the grounds of Roberts' hypothesis that England would be already involved overseas with one major power, when a second would strike at a home island stripped of its Regular forces. Balfour quoted a military statement that in March 1900

with 70,000 men, including a relatively small proportion both of cavalry (say one brigade) and of guns (say 25 6-gun batteries), with no more transport than would be required for the ammunition reserve, and no more food than could be carried in the men's knapsacks, the adventure might, at great risks, but with some chance of success, be undertaken by an enterprising enemy if only he could effect a landing.¹

70,000 was the hypothetical invasion force adopted by Balfour, and by most future examiners of the invasion problem.

The question then hung on the naval defence. Balfour assumed that if the Royal Navy could stop an unwieldy convoy conveying 120,000, it would halt a force of 70,000, and if it could frustrate a cross-Channel invasion from France, it could also intercept one from Germany crossing the North Sea. Therefore, to make things as difficult as possible for the defenders and as easy as possible for the invaders, the hypothesis was adopted of 70,000 French troops crossing the Channel and landing in Southern England. It was assumed that Britain's naval power was absent or destroyed, owing to some great blunder or disaster. In short, the entire War Office case was granted. But Balfour had not forgotten Battenberg's arguments that technical development

1. Cab 3/1/18A. 11 November 1903. pp. 5-6.

redounded more to the benefit of the defence than the attack. In addition , Balfour had been receiving secret papers on the value of the submarine in defence from Sir John Fisher, then C-in-C, Portsmouth,¹ and his summary laid a heavy emphasis upon the defensive power of this device. Balfour went so far as to state that sea command "no longer exists within the radius of the submarine and torpedo boat." (It was to be more than a decade before the Admiralty would admit this fact.) The torpedo boat could be driven from the sea only by a larger and more powerful torpedo boat; the submarine could not be driven from the sea at all. Neither battleship, cruiser, nor destroyer could meet it. Balfour thus encapsuled the open arguments of Battenberg and the confidential persuasions of Fisher, on behalf of the defensive powers of smaller craft, as a powerful part of his conclusive memorandum.

Besides the powers of Britain's second line of naval defence, the problems involved in a French invasion were formidable. Assuming that the hypothetical 70,000 could be mobilized and concentrated at a Channel port in secrecy, the collection of the necessary transport could not fail to come to the notice of Britain. To transport a force of this size, on the scale employed in the 1901 French amphibious manoeuvres, would require 210,000 tons - twice the amount available in all French Channel ports on a given day, even including small sailing vessels unsuitable for the work. To do the job quickly and secretly with the necessary tonnage, the French would have to resort to the "high-handed and unscrupulous operation" of seizing all British ships in French harbours. This would provide both troops and transports, but would unfailingly give Great Britain full

1. Balfour MSS.(49710) ff. 69 ff.

notice of the impending attack. Because no single French port was large enough for the entire convoy, it would have to be broken up into smaller groups, leading to division of force and possible attack by British torpedo boats. Unloading the transports and fitting them out for embarkation would impose a further estimated delay of six days, which would suffice for the arming and deploying of all available British small vessels in the Channel.

The crossing of the Channel represented an even more hazardous stage of the operation, and here Balfour was heavily dependent upon the arguments of the Marine Rundschau. He wrote of the difficulties of marshalling this "undisciplined herd of merchant-ships, nearly half of which must be manned by crews who had never been to sea in them before" within crowded harbours and later on the open sea. A daylight crossing would be the only means of bringing the enemy over, for travelling at night in convoy was possible only with long practice. Moreover, the convoy would be restricted in speed to that of the slowest ship and the crossing therefore would take over ten hours, and possibly twenty. Balfour asked:

Could it, indeed, be accomplished at all? Could a fleet, however strong in battle-ships, give adequate protection to 200 transports throughout a twenty-hours' voyage over a calm sea crowded with hostile cruisers and torpedo craft? It is not an operation which, were the situation reversed, and we were the invaders, a British Admiral would care to recommend.¹

But the most powerful argument against the feasibility of invasion yet remained: the difficulties attending a landing on the British coast. Fine weather must be assumed, for if it suddenly changed, the invaders would find themselves in the unenviable position of being left afloat and half ashore. The selection of a landing place itself would be a difficulty,

1. Cab 3/1/18A. p. 13.

for there were few places near the presumed French embarkation ports where the transports could come within a half-mile of the shore. Balfour spoke for the Committee.

We cannot foresee precisely how the invaders, in making their selection, would balance the incompatible merits of being near their port of embarkation, of having deep water at no great distance from the shore, and of providing the best strategic starting-point for the land advance.¹

Even under ideal conditions it would take at least 48 hours to disembark, which meant that the transports would be anchored for two days and two nights off the hostile English coast, open to attacks by torpedo boats by night and submarines by day. The situation a fleet of warships would be in, in similar circumstances, had long convinced naval authorities of all nations that close blockade would be impossible. This judgment dealt with a more highly mobile, disciplined, and homogeneous battle fleet - not a helpless and unarmed, unpractised and immobilised convoy, without torpedo nets.

Even if there were a large number of powerful French battleships present acting as escorts, these would not always be a positive help, for ... cruisers alone, if fearlessly handled, and sufficiently numerous, might wreck the whole adventure, though, doubtless, with heavy loss to themselves. Attacking simultaneously from all sides, some, at least, must succeed in getting in among the transports; and, once there, the havoc they might cause seems limitless. Every shot they fired, and every torpedo they discharged, would find a victim among the thickly crowded shipping, while any defence attempted by the battleships might well prove less dangerous to the cruisers than to convoy itself.²

Balfour summarised "that all these various forms of attack would all fail seems to the Committee incredible." Submarines by day, torpedo boats by

1. Cab 3/1/18A. p. 14.

2. Ibid. p. 15.

night, and cruisers at any time - all fore-doomed an invasion attempt, not to mention fire-ships and artillery fire from the shore.

History has no record of what would happen to an army of 70,000 men close packed in improvised transports if even two or three torpedo-boats got in among them - to say nothing of a whole flotilla. That the confusion, the horror, and the destruction would exceed anything which we can easily imagine in cold blood, seems certain. Fortunately, as the Committee hold, no invading army is likely, in existing conditions, to run the risk.¹

The Admiralty received this pronouncement with acclamation. Selborne, after examining an advance copy, remarked to Balfour that he had read it "with immense interest and admiration. We may have to correct a detail or two on close examination but there assuredly is no big Naval blunder in it."² Selborne's enthusiasm for the paper might have been modified had he known the extent to which it had been written under Admiral Fisher's influence. While he was preparing the paper, Balfour had been subjected to a bombardment of memoranda from Fisher dealing with invasion, submarines, and general naval policy. In October Fisher had prepared a paper on "The Effect of Submarine Boats", which asserted that the new weapon affects the Army, because, imagine even one Submarine Boat, with a flock of transports in sight loaded with some two or three thousand troops! ... Even the bare thought makes invasion impossible!³

Fisher's efforts were not without reward, for the Admiral later termed the Prime Minister's invasion paper "simply splendid ... the most masterful document I ever perused."⁴ Fisher wrote to Balfour in a more thoughtful

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1. Cab 3/1/18A. Balfour devoted two additional pages to the possibility of two powers having defeated the Navy, but this was judged to leave British fortunes less impaired than the above contingency, hence has not been taken up. (p.15).
 2. Balfour MSS./Selborne to Balfour. 16 November 1903.
 3. A.J. Marder. Fear God and Dread Nought. Vol. I. p. 281.
 4. Balfour MSS. (49710) Fisher to Sandars. ca. 3 January 1904. f. 69.

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the only criticism I venture to offer is that hardly sufficient emphasis is laid on the fact of the more than geometrical progression with which difficulties increase with numbers in dealing with Embarkations of troops and their impedimenta - 10,000 men are a fleabite! but 20,000 means the gathering almost of a fleet of transports - it is conceivable that the former number could be in a few hours in the Men of War of the Fleet (they would be packed like herrings!) but the 20,000 men would require an organized transport ...¹

At the same time Fisher continued to preach the power of submarines to the Prime Minister and repeatedly pressed him to come to "see the Submarines gambolling about!", for, as Fisher believed,

Only those who have seen a flotilla of submarine boats (as at Portsmouth) working out in the open sea can form the right conception of the revolution they have caused.²

Balfour succumbed to this temptation late in December, and this provided the Admiral with an additional entré. Following the visit, Fisher sent Balfour a new confidential print entitled "Invasion and Submarines", at the same time cautioning him that it "must not be quoted directly or indirectly as if so it would entirely capsize my dealings with the Admiralty."³ Fisher's motives in providing Balfour with help on the invasion problem were not completely unselfish, (he became First Sea Lord ten months later) but they had a great effect on Balfour, which the latter acknowledged.

It is unnecessary to tell you how heartily I am in sympathy with your observations on the relation between Submarines and Invasion: indeed, my paper on Home Defence, which I think was shown you, is largely based upon the considerations to which you refer.⁴

1. Balfour MSS. (49710) Fisher to Balfour, n.d. but ca. November 1903.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid. Fisher to Sanders. ca. 3 January 1904, f. 70.

4. Ibid. Balfour to Fisher. 3 January 1904. f. 71.

The predictable reaction of the soldiers was dismay and disunity. While Fisher had been working behind the backs of the Admiralty, he at least was doing so in a cause for which his superiors were in sympathy. The situation at the War Office was somewhat more complicated. The new Secretary of War was, as befitted a long-time worker in the Admiralty, a fervent advocate of Blue Water strategy. Brodrick, his predecessor, in contrast, had been a detail-ridden administrator whose concern for minutiae had left him little time for consideration of the more sublime elements of military strategy.¹ By default he had accepted the traditional War Office view on invasion, and had complained shortly before he was replaced that it was only during 1903 that it had been argued that a large home force was unnecessary, and that their cost had been criticized.² But even after Balfour had replaced Brodrick with Arnold-Forster, the former was permitted to attend the C.I.D. meetings, as Secretary of State for India. During the crucial meetings of November and December which dealt conclusively with invasion, the picture was further complicated by the absence of Lord Roberts, who was suffering from a virus. This meant that besides the discredited Brodrick, Nicholson was now the only active "invasionist" in attendance.

Both Nicholson and Arnold-Forster lobbied energetically for Roberts' support for their side in the invasion dispute. Following the C.I.D. meeting at which Balfour's paper was read, Nicholson wrote Roberts that he believed it would be accepted, even though its conclusions did not

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1. Brodrick's preoccupation with detail is seen mostly clearly in his letters to Balfour (Balfour MSS. 49720) and his correspondence with Roberts (Roberts MSS., Case 20926.Box B.5 Brodrick to Roberts, 1901-03.)
 2. Balfour MSS. (49720) Memo. by Brodrick, early September 1903, f. 228.

appear to him as "logically correct." He feared the growth in the influence and power of the Admiralty at the expense of the War Office.

What I am afraid of is that, if all contentions of the Admiralty are concurred in and the demands for an increase in naval strength regarded as of paramount importance, no funds will be available for the maintenance of an efficient army.¹

Of course it is well written, but it is not convincing and bears marks of being the production of an amateur who had never studied the principles of naval strategy. The best writers on that subject are Spencer Wilkinson and Capt. Mahan, U.S.N., and both consider a moderate amount of land defence to be essential to the free and decisive action of a powerful navy.²

This was bound to be a theme congenial to Roberts, for he had written a recent official complaint to Arnold-Forster that the nation was spending twice as much on the Navy as it was on the Army. Roberts' argument was somewhat tenuous, for he had had to omit the cost of the Indian armies from the discussion, and transfer the costs of the land defence of naval bases from the Army to the Navy Estimates to achieve his 2 to 1 ratio. But his argument showed that Nicholson was not the only senior military official who was apprehensive lest the Admiralty gain the upper hand.³ But Roberts had also been sincere in his acceptance of Balfour's paper. On November 22nd he suggested to Arnold-Forster that the cost of the Regular and Auxiliary Forces should be brought directly before the Cabinet, because, "on the supposition that an Invasion is almost an impossibility, the strength of the Auxiliary Forces, except the Yeomanry, is far beyond what is required." Besides, regarding the latter, it was impossible "to give them sufficient training to make them efficient."⁴ Arnold-Forster was in

1. Roberts MSS. Case 20926. Box N.2 R. 52/107. Nicholson to Roberts. 24 November 1903.

2. Ibid. R52/108. Nicholson to Roberts. 29 November 1903.

3. Ibid. Case X20931. Box A.2. Roberts' Notes on Arnold-Forster's "Memorandum No. 3" dated 20 October 1903.

4. Ibid. R4/13. Roberts' Note on "Estimates." 22 November 1903.

full accord, and wrote to Roberts, rejoicing that Balfour in a recent speech had

given the full weight of his authority to the view which I so strongly entertain to the effect that the Regular Army must be looked for in the main as intended for over-sea work, the defence of the United Kingdom being left in the first instance to the navy, and secondly, to the regenerated and re-organised Auxiliary Forces.¹

In the light of subsequent developments, it is important to remember that Lord Roberts did not protest at a policy based "on the supposition that an Invasion is almost an impossibility" and in fact actively encouraged it and carried it into effect.

Nicholson, however, remained fearful that the Admiralty would gain the upper hand in the C.I.D., which he saw as a balance between the two services.

He later wrote at length to Roberts complaining of Admiralty pretensions.

No doubt, Lord Selborne is a Statesman of marked ability and clearness of perception, but his naval advisers appeared to me to take a somewhat narrow view, being apt to assume, in opposition to history and experience, that an adequate and efficient Navy was the one and only essential to the security of the British Empire ... It is to be hoped that the present tendency to adopt naval methods in dealing with the Army will gradually die out. The Army is continually being exposed to hostile criticism, the Navy never ...²

It will not suffice to dismiss Nicholson as a solitary paranoid, for he was among the ablest military administrators of his generation, and his sentiments were widely shared by a number of other officers. Their suspicion and irritation was not without foundation, for during the crucial ten months in which the C.I.D. had thrashed out the problem of invasion, a powerful committee had begun to reform the War Office. None of its three members was an active army officer. Its chairman was Lord Esher, a highly-placed civilian who was a confidant of the King as well as a close friend

1. Roberts MSS. B4/15. Arnold-Forster to Roberts. 28 November 1903.

2. Ibid. Case X20926. Box W.2. R52/113. Nicholson to Roberts. 10 October 1904.

of Balfour. The remaining two members were Admiral Fisher, perhaps the strongest protagonist of the Navy then available, and Sir George Clarke, who had served in the Royal Engineers but had retired, a writer of the Blue Water persuasion. All three in varying degrees represented the new naval-centred strategy, and their Committee made rapid recommendations for the reconstitution of the War Office, which were effected with a speed and decisiveness hitherto unknown to British Government departments. In order to carry their recommendations into effect, Arnold-Forster, the former Financial Secretary of the Admiralty, became Secretary of State for War. Contemporaries argued that as the War Office was incapable of reforming itself from within, reform must be imposed on it from without. As necessary as this was, the generals can be forgiven for feelings akin to a persecution complex. It is in this context that the War Office's last-ditch fight against Balfour's memorandum in the C.I.D. must be viewed.

The situation in the C.I.D., after Balfour had read his paper, seems to have verged on the grotesque. At the first meeting of the C.I.D. attended by Arnold-Forster in his new capacity, the Prime Minister had established an important precedent by presenting a detailed and comprehensive memorandum demonstrating that invasion was nearly impossible. The scene which followed must have seemed unusual in the extreme. Against this authoritative paper of the Prime Minister, his discredited successor, now Secretary of State for India, in league with his second most important military advisor, Nicholson, "undertook to prepare a scheme for landing an invading force, which they would ask the naval members of the Committee to consider."¹ In the next two weeks, Military Intelligence reprinted a

1. Cab 2/1. "Minutes of 23rd Meeting." 18 November 1903.

revised and updated version of Robertson's alarming memorandum of French invasion,¹ as well as the report of the 1900 Conference on Raids.² In addition Brodrick and Nicholson both wrote new memoranda, which were presented at the C.I.D. meeting on December 12th. Nicholson restricted himself to a recapitulation of arguments that had already been put forward in the C.I.D., stressing French superiority in torpedo boats and the over-commitment of the Admiralty in a world-wide war. He invoked again the name of Mahan to the effect that a land defence was always necessary for an efficient Navy. His final argument concerned the Auxiliary Forces. Nicholson believed that

their abolition or even their substantial reduction might produce a serious effect on the martial spirit and physical training of the home population.³

A viable home army would prove valuable in other contingencies, for it could provide a deterrent in a future war where the Home Fleet might be absent to prevent the junction of the French and Russian fleets.⁴ Again Nicholson had shown his inability to absorb the subtleties of naval strategy, for it had been stressed repeatedly that no power would invade without a powerful escorting fleet. This he had never accepted.

Brodrick in his paper was content with picking at details in the previous navy papers and his ignorance of strategy was even more obvious. He was especially critical of the official estimates that raids only of 10,000 maximum or an invasion of 70,000 were possible. He sketched out the possibility of two groups of 20,000 each landing at two separate places on

1. Cab 3/1/4A. "Military Resources of France." 2 November 1903.

2. Cab 3/1/9A.

3. Cab 3/1/19A. "Home defence: Remarks on the "Draft Report on the Possibility of Serious Invasion." 7 December 1903, by Nicholson, p.3.

4. Ibid. p. 4.

sections of the Southern coast undefended by coast defence vessels. Brodrick apparently had not grasped that the naval defence scheme covered only those areas where landings were feasible and some important military objective lay near to the coast. He also scouted possible adventures originating from Northern France aimed at "the coast of Yorkshire, or in Scotland."¹ It was apparent that most of the discussion over strategy in the C.I.D., as well as the naval papers, had completely passed him by. His more telling argument was that the very rapidity of technical development made strategic and tactical prophesies dangerous, for

the new conditions of electricity, wireless telegraphy, torpedoes, submarine boats, and the other numerous forces brought into action by modern science ... in all these scientific advances there are disturbing forces of very great magnitude.²

Brodrick was ready to sign a protest against Balfour's conclusion if he could have the support of the military. But before the counter-attack could gather momentum, Balfour again intervened and brought the inter-service debate to a close. In an important policy speech on army reform, delivered on November 27, 1903, Balfour announced publicly his own philosophic doubt in the contingency of overseas attack. This brought the discussion within the C.I.D. to an effective close. In his public pronouncement, Balfour cleverly strove to divide his opposition. Speaking to a partisan Unionist audience, Balfour identified the "invasionist" position with the Leader of the Opposition, Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman.

Home defence was the end which he regarded as of importance: the foreign expedition he regarded as a rare and deplorable incident for which but few preparations need be made. (Laughter,)

1. WO 105/44. "Remarks on Possibility of Serious Invasion." by St. John Brodrick. 11 December 1903. p.4.

2. Ibid; Roberts MSS. R13/403 Brodrick to Roberts. 21 November 1903.

Well, my own view is precisely and exactly the opposite of that which was expressed by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. (Cheers). I do not believe myself that home defence requires a large regular army. (Hear,hear.) ... I believe the public at large have inverted the true importance of the problems with which this Empire has to deal. Our great difficulty is not home defence; it is a foreign difficulty.¹

Balfour had nailed his colours to the Blue Water mast, and had now outmanoeuvred the professionals of both services in taking his case to the public. Although Balfour had been careful to present it as his personal view and not that of the C.I.D., it was generally regarded as authoritative. The Times the next day devoted a long and adulatory first leader to the Prime Minister's speech, and welcomed him to the navalist fold. It read

MR. BALFOUR's lively personal interest in the question of Imperial defence are indications of progress more hopeful than the nominal adoption of the recommendations of many commissions ... MR. BALFOUR'S announcement that the Regular Army is not to be regarded as responsible for the defence of these islands is one of the utmost importance, and shows that the influence of the Defence Committee has already been powerful enough to induce the War Office to abandon their former rooted conviction that the duty of the Regular Army was to duplicate the work of the Navy in case the Navy failed.²

An official policy had now prevailed in the C.I.D. and announced to the public. Balfour's reputation for lassitude of decision was deceptive. Once he became interested in an issue, he could move rapidly, even ruthlessly, to a decision. This was never more true than in the case of the invasion controversy in 1903.

Balfour had imposed a "Draft Report" upon the Committee which had originally been meant only to record the previous discussion; now by his

1. "Mr. Balfour on Army Reform." Times. 28 November 1903. p. 12.

2. Ibid. p. 11

public pronouncement he had taken the initiative away from the feuding services, and brought an end to the "Battle of the Memoranda." This terminated the fifteen year old quarrel between the two services, and served as the foundation of official policy for the next fifteen years. That there was a policy at all was due to his authoritative intervention, and it is worth recalling in this connexion that the very months in which Balfour was leading the C.I.D. to a decision, he was under the greatest pressure from external sources, as the fiscal reform controversy brought about by Chamberlain's campaign for Imperial Preference was then at its height. This had led to two great reorganizations of the Cabinet in September, just as Balfour began his invasion memorandum. At least as far as the invasion controversy was concerned, Salisbury's choice of a successor had been an act of enlightened nepotism.

A battle had been won, but the war was not yet over. The quarrel between the services had been resolved, but the invasion controversy was far from dead. A policy had been formulated, but attempts to put it into effect were to meet with fierce resistance, and bring about a long, protracted public controversy.

CHAPTER V: THE POLICY ESTABLISHED, 1904-1907.

The ten months of C.I.D. deliberation had provided the Government with a national defence policy. Yet the instinctive fear of invasion lay so deep in the British nation, and supported so many special interests, that the struggle to remould British defence in the light of the new policy was to occupy more than four years. Behind the scenes, the discussion of the invasion possibility initiated by Balfour and his chief advisers continued, enlivened by the lessons provided by the Russo-Japanese War. The war began significantly, on February 8, 1904, with a surprise Japanese attack on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur. This and subsequent actions were seized upon by strategists, amateur and professional alike, as concrete evidence of naval warfare under modern conditions. Experience, it was felt, would finally supplement theory, and the lessons of this first war between two modern steam fleets were continually being analyzed, absorbed, and applied. Home defence enthusiasts, such as St. Loe Strachey, appropriated the War for their own ends. Strachey wrote soon after the surprise attack which began the War that the appalling suddenness of naval attack was both qualitatively and quantitatively different from anything known in land warfare, so that "to those who are on the land and expecting an attack from the sea, the water becomes a place of dreadful mystery from which at any moment a sudden and unexpected blow may fall."¹ On the other hand, Blue Water theorists such as Sir George Clarke regarded this same surprise attack as "a striking object lesson" of the truths contained in Balfour's invasion paper, and believed the war was "replete with the most

1. "The Teachings of the War". Spectator. 20 February 1904. pp. 281-282.

important lessons", such as that opposed landings were now impossible because of the dangers of torpedo boat attack.¹ The War Office was especially interested in aspects of the war bearing on invasion, and prepared a special report on Japanese arrangements for overseas expeditions while the war was yet in progress.

In addition to the lessons provided by the Russo-Japanese War, it was felt in the War Office that a pragmatic military exercise was required which would give substance to the theoretical discussion of the invasion operation undertaken in the C.I.D. The idea was perhaps inspired by the amphibious manoeuvres undertaken by France, Russia, and Germany in 1901,² and was also brought forward by Strachey in The Spectator in October 1903. Strachey suggested that future manoeuvres in England should be carried out under invasion conditions, based on the idea that a light column of 20,000 of the enemy might land near London and be engaged by the Auxiliaries. He hoped it would prove the value of cyclist troops in home defence as four times faster than infantry, and would also test the mettle of the Auxiliary Force as defenders against invasion.³ Six days later, a similar scheme was submitted to Arnold-Foster, providing for combined manoeuvres in the North of England.⁴ Arnold-Foster quickly adopted the idea, and it was brought forward at the first C.I.D. meeting which he attended.⁵ Admiral Sir John Fisher also learned of the proposal, and wrote the day after the C.I.D.

1. Balfour MSS. (49700) Clarke to Balfour. 27 June 1904.

2. IF-10, War Office. A661. "Foreign Manoeuvres, 1900." I.D.W.O., 1901. WO/33/315 "Notes on Transport by Sea and Disembarkation of Japanese Troops." 27 July 1904.

3. "The Ideal Manoeuvres." Spectator. 10 October 1903. pp. 552-553.

4. Arnold-Foster MSS. (50304) Hildyard to Arnold-Foster, 16 October 1903.

5. Cab 2/1. "Minutes of 23rd Meeting. C.I.D." 18 November 1903.

meeting that

Instead of our military manoeuvres being on Salisbury Plain and its vicinity (ineffectually aping the vast Continental Armies!) we should be employing ourselves in joint naval and military manoeuvres, embarking 50,000 men at Portsmouth and landing them at Milford Haven or Bantry Bay! This would make the foreigners sit up! Fancy, in the Mediterranean Fleet we disembarked 12,000 men with guns in 19 minutes! What do you think of that! and we should hurry up the soldiers! No doubt there will be good-natured chaff.¹

Arnold-Forster became the prime mover behind the project from its inception, and cancelled all subsidiary manoeuvre schemes for 1904 on the ground that "We have had manoeuvres on and off for 20 years, and 3 years war in Africa, but have yet never yet tried the only problem which concerns us." Arnold-Forster was more concerned for a true interdepartmental participation in the operation.

I suggested that we assign a certain or definite force and the brains of a certain number of Naval officers to the Military attackers. In no other way can war conditions be assimilated ... It is not necessary that the defenders should mobilise many troops, as the question is, Can a landing be effected? not what will happen after the troops have landed.²

Arnold-Forster's campaign for combined manoeuvres brought opposition from his military advisors. Even Lord Roberts, the Commander-in-Chief, fought a delaying action against the proposal, saying "Before giving an opinion, I would like to talk the proposals over with some sailors, for I confess I am somewhat skeptical as to their being of much practical value."³ Roberts, in common with many other Generals, was more concerned that the traditional

1. A.J. Marder. Fear God and Dread Nought. Vol. I. Fisher to Escher, 19 November 1903. p. 291.

2. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50355) Diary. 9 December 1903.

3. Roberts MSS. Case 20931. Box A.2. Roberts to Arnold-Forster. 25 December 1903.

land manoeuvres would continue.

Arnold-Forster presented his full case to a predominantly hostile Army Board on December 15, 1903.¹ He argued that the occasion would provide an ideal testing-ground for the rival contentions of the War Office and Admiralty as to whether or not the fleet could prevent a landing force. But the following conditions were necessary:-

1. The invading force must be a large one (20,000 to 30,000 men).
2. The objective must be the coast of England.
3. There must be a joint naval and military attack and a joint naval and military defence. (The military part of the defence is, however, not of great importance, as if the landing can be effected, the problem is thereby solved in favour of the invader.)²

One officer objected that the Manoeuvres, instead of leading to co-operation and accord between the two services, would bring about further friction and "to the probable divergence of opinion between the Military and Naval Umpires." Arnold-Forster admitted that there was much experience to confirm this possibility, but deprecated any suggestion of interservice rivalry and attempts to turn the Manoeuvres into an interservice competition. He suggested that the Admiralty be invited to provide a Flag Officer and a squadron, to be put at the disposal of the "aggressors".

Such an officer would, I have no doubt, enter thoroughly into the scheme, and would devote all his skill to outwitting and defeating his naval colleague with the defending force.³

Arnold-Forster ended by outlining a scheme for embarking the First Army Corps from Southampton to Portsmouth to Romney Marsh or Deal, a distance which would approximate the length of sea voyage from Cherbourg.

1. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50300) "Combined Naval and Military Manoeuvres. 1904. 15 December 1903." by A-F. f. 190.
2. Ibid., p. 2.
3. Ibid.

The Army Board finally decided in favour of the scheme on January 14, 1904, advocating the landing of two divisions of all arms, on the English coast,¹ and suggested that the Admiralty be invited to a Joint Conference on the subject. Arnold-Forster requested that arrangements be made to meet the naval representatives.² General Frederick Stopford, however, wished to postpone the Manoeuvres until 1905, and instead held only an embarkation practice during 1904. Arnold-Forster disagreed.

... this would miss the whole point. We do not want to practice landing an Army on a foreign coast, but we do want to see whether a foreign Army can land on our coast. Finally I arranged that he should see PRINCE LOUIS privately, and if they agreed generally we should send an official communication to the Admiralty.³

However, the Admiralty proved predictably reluctant to take part in an exercise designed to prove the feasibility of invasion. Stopford, after having visited Prince Louis Battenberg, the D.N.I., found that "the Admiralty have now apparently given up the idea altogether", which, Arnold-Forster lamented "leaves us in a most unfortunate position."⁴ The latter was not daunted, however, and introduced the matter at a meeting of the C.I.D. the next day, announcing

The problem which he proposed to try being whether a hostile force of 30,000 men escorted by the enemy's fleet had a reasonable probability of landing in England in face of the opposition of our naval forces. For this purpose he will embark a whole army corps with their guns and stores.⁵

Although the projected size of the invasion force, 30,000, was close to that

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1. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50304) "Army Board Proceedings. 14 January 1904." f. 125.
 2. Ibid. (50336) Diary, 9 February 1904. f. 95.
 3. Ibid. 26 February 1904. ff. 178-179.
 4. Ibid. (50337) Diary, 1 March 1904, f. 2. •
 5. Cab 2/1. "Minutes of 32nd Meeting, C.I.D." 2 March 1904.

admitted as possible by the Admiralty as a raiding force, the issue was still a very sensitive one with the naval representatives, who confirmed their refusal to take part in Combined Manoeuvres.¹ Arnold-Forster characteristically pressed on unilaterally, noting in his Diary

Saw Stopford at once, and instructed him to proclaim the County of Essex and the southern part of Suffolk, to include Hollesley Bay and to include land up and beyond Aldeburgh. The refusal of the Admiralty at this time is very inconvenient and I think unwise.²

The refusal of the Admiralty to cooperate and to test the validity of their arguments in the C.I.D. by taking part in combined manoeuvres shows both the continuing sensitivity of the invasion issue and the continuing lack of inter-departmental accord. More directly, Admiralty non-cooperation deprived Arnold-Forster's project of much of its validity and value, and threatened to turn it into another of the purely military exercises of the past, which reinforced the War Office tendency to overlook the important naval aspect of the invasion operation. The Admiralty's actions also show that they were not as assured regarding the outcome of invasion as their printed papers seemed to assume.

The War Office continued its preparations, alone. In anticipation for the later and more elaborate operation, a series of minor exercises were carried out from April 19 to 22 under Brigadier F.H. Lake, who had been a fervent protagonist of invasion while in Military Intelligence. The operations featured a staff ride, "based on the supposed landing of a hostile force on an open beach, the establishment of a base of operations, and the subsequent advance inland." Field-Marshal Evelyn Wood and other key officials of the War Office witnessed an unopposed landing of heavy artillery in a sham

1. Cab 2/1. "Minutes of 33rd Meeting, C.I.D." 4 March 1904.

2. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50337) Diary, 4 March 1904. f. 28.

attack on Whale Island. A sham landing also took place at Bournemouth, which represented the embarkation of a "large force of men and guns in a hostile country."¹

But all these exercises were merely rehearsals leading up to the more extensive operations which took place at Clacton Beach in Northeast Essex in September, 1904. The great interest in the operations shown by the War Office staff, especially the Military Intelligence Department, was so pronounced that Arnold-Forster protested against the large numbers of Headquarters officers - 19 in all - attending as spectators. He complained "practically that this exodus/denudes the War Office of the whole of its Military personnel for a fortnight" and deprived the M.I.D. of its leadership for three weeks, for the General Staff had transferred itself bodily to the scene of the manoeuvres.² Such enthusiasm was not shared by Charles à Court Repington, the Military Correspondent of The Times. He wrote to one of his War Office confidants that "I shall most likely look in at the landing on the coast. I presume the place and time of the enemy's attack will be duly noted in the orders of the defending army!"³

The fullest account of the operations is found in the twelve-page report prepared by Lyttleton, which was forwarded by Arnold-Forster to Balfour. It had been produced with great speed and was completed only two days following the conclusion of the Manoeuvres. In the beginning, Lyttleton noted the precedent which the operation had established.

1. "Combined Naval and Military Manoeuvres." Times. 20 April 1904. p. 10.

2. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50304) "Attendance of War Office Staff at the Manoeuvres." 30 August 1904. ff. 127-128.

3. Kitchener-Marker MSS. (52277) Repington to Marker, 19 August 1904.

Our Army had, hitherto, rarely or never been exercised in operations in a close country, such as the County of Essex presents, and where we should have to fight, did an invader ever reach these shores. It is in the highly enclosed districts in the Southern and Eastern Coasts that our stand could be made, and not on places such as Salisbury Plain which do not present the typical features of an English country-side.¹

Similar sentiments were expressed by Arnold-Forster, who had rejoiced in a letter to Balfour that "We have had manoeuvres - at last - in enclosed country, which really represents five-sixths of England."² Another precedent which had been established was Admiralty participation in the operation, for six cruisers under Rear-Admiral Sir Wilmot Fawkes had escorted the invading forces. This cooperation, however, had not been easily come by, as Lyttleton's report made plain.

... The Navy were particularly anxious that there should be no doubt whatever in the mind of the public that this invasion was not undertaken, and could not be undertaken, unless command of the sea had been first definitely and securely attained by the invading power. In accordance with the wishes of the Admiralty a communication was sent to the Press, therefore, which stated that in the scheme of operations no question of home defence was involved, and that the invasion of Essex was to be regarded as the invasion of a foreign territory by an English army dependent on a fleet which had definitely secured command of the sea.³

The need to consider Admiralty sensitivities lent an ambivalent atmosphere to the manoeuvres, and it appeared unresolved whether this was to be a practice descent by the British army on a hostile coast, or a practice which would prove the possibility of invasion and the value of the home defence arrangements. This ambiguity was by no means resolved by an

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1. Balfour MSS. (49722) "Army Manoeuvres. 1904." By W.C. Lyttelton. 19 September 1904. f. 211.
MSS. (50304) Arnold-Forster
 2. Arnold-Forster/to Balfour. 17 September 1904. f. 131.
 3. Balfour MSS. Op.Cit. ff. 214-215.

impromptu speech delivered by Lyttleton at the scene, in which he declared that not only were the operations designed to represent an invasion of England, but that they proved invasion impossible.¹ Arnold-Forster went out of his way to thank the Admiralty for their help in the operation, observing pointedly to Selborne that "When I reflect that any way in which this country is engaged, either on somebody else's coast, or somebody else must land in ours, the need for combined operations seems obvious." An inter-departmental correspondence on the value of combined manoeuvres was published in due course, for the assurance of the public.²

In contrast with Arnold-Forster's original plan for a landing force of 30,000, the actual operations involved a force of 12,000 men, 42 guns, and 2700 horses. The commander of the "invaders" was Sir John French, who would lead the British Expeditionary Force to France exactly a decade later. The landing place had been selected, after consultation with the Admiralty, and consideration of both naval and military factors, Lyttleton explained that

Clacton is one of the places which a careful reconnaissance of our coast lines has been pointed to as being particularly well adapted for a descent on our coast by a foreign power. The beach is well suited for purposes of disembarkation, the anchorage is protected by the Gun Fleet Shoal between which and the shore it is possible for warships and transports to form up. Water sufficiently deep to take ships of large tonnage is found comparatively close to the shore, and the approaches from inland to the shore are such as would assist an invader.³

But because the invading army could not be supplied from its landing beach, it was necessary for the "invaders" to seize a harbour, in this case

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1. T.M. Maguire. "The Metaphysical Manoeuvres of a Phantom Army." United Service Magazine. November 1904. p. 148.
 2. "The Essex Manoeuvres." Times. 3 November 1904. p. 10.
 3. Balfour MSS. Op. Cit. f. 211.

Maldon, for "the first descent on the coast would only be preliminary to the attack of such a harbour from the land side."

Because the War Office wished to test the time involved in the landing, it was assumed that no heavy resistance would be offered by the defenders on the shore.

in framing the scheme the Chief of the General Staff placed the Red Forces in such situations that only a small portion of them would be able to anticipate the arrival of a covering party on shore from the transports, and that even this detachment would not be able to do so unless the disembarkation were somewhat slow.¹

The defenders were kept in scattered groups at some distance from the coast. The arrangements conceded to the invaders fair weather and an unopposed landing. The Clacton manoeuvres therefore were really only of value regarding possible land operations in the United Kingdom, for they assumed the aggressors would succeed in their landing. The defenders were outnumbered two to one initially, although reserves would ultimately become available against the invaders. General French was directed to seize Colchester and proceed to Maldon, which was to act as the base of operations for an invasion on a greater scale. The mobile reserves of the defenders, under General Wynne, were dispersed "in four portions - separated from one another by distances which would prevent their being concentrated in less than two days." This would also test French, who would have to prove to discover where the defender's main strength lay.²

Unhappily, the brevity of the actual exercise, owing to the need to release the sea transports, and other financial considerations, did not permit the war game fully to unfold. French's invasion force did not have time to reach Maldon, although it could have had more time been allotted. But

1. Balfour MSS. On Clt. f. 213.

2. Ibid. f. 215.

French's slow progress also resulted from the defenders'

excellent use of the facilities for delaying action which the numerous ditches and hedgerows of Essex afforded, and although in inferior force, succeeded in delaying his opponent, while, at the same time, evading any decisive combat.¹

Arnold-Forster recorded in his Diary that the exercise had provided many valuable lessons, but complained over the slowness of the land operations: "the whole thing was in danger of becoming a fiasco, averted, I believe, by the A.G. (Adjutant-General) insisting upon the embarkation proceeding on the last two days; it having been intended to abandon it altogether on account of the bad weather."² Months later, Arnold-Forster had formed a more positive picture of the manoeuvres, and referred to them in Parliament,³ as well as in a private letter to Kitchener, as a final proof of the impossibility of invasion.

I saw the embarkation, which occupied four days, interrupted by the occurrence of a summer swell, I saw the Men-of-War and transports lying at anchor by day and by night within one hour's steaming of the Harwich Flotilla of Destroyers on one side, and the Medway Flotilla on the other, and I knew well that if it had been real war, not one of the ships that lay off Clacton would have been afloat an hour after sundown. But, indeed, I did not need the object lesson of the Essex Manoeuvres to convince me that our present Military organization is a folly; that as long as our Fleet swims there will be no invasion, and that when our Fleet fails us, no force on land, however numerous, however well organized, will preserve us from ruin.⁴

Lyttleton's report would have given scant comfort to the amateur home defence tacticians who had agitated for so many years for manoeuvres in enclosed country, ^{as it} and cast severe doubts upon the efficacy of the

1. Balfour MSS. Op. Cit. f. 216.

2. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50340) Diary, 16 September 1904, f.9.

3. Hansard. 28 March 1905. col. 1406.

4. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50342) Diary, Arnold-Forster to Kitchener, 16 March 1905. f. 72.

"hedgerow defence."

... the difficulties of fighting in a close country, and the modification of tactics produced by the difficulty of seeing and of communicating with one another, were clearly marked. It was found that there were but few opportunities for the employment of Artillery, while the action of Cavalry was restricted to the roads ... The need for adopting special means of directing the advance of a Brigade and ensuring the preservation of its true direction in attack were unmistakably recognisable. The necessity for the closest inter-communication between all parts of a force, not only with each other, but with the Commander, were strongly forced on attention ... The power of the defence in a highly enclosed country was well brought out, but it was certainly apparent that the closeness of the country did not favour the defence alone. On the contrary, the attack, in the opinion of most of those who were present, and in that of the Chief of the General Staff, benefitted more than the defence. The small field of fire presented to the Defenders destroyed the advantage which a sedentary position gives to fire effect, while every hedgerow offered a covered approach to their opponents, and every ditch a fire position from which it was not easy to dislodge them by counter-attack.¹

The same lesson was hammered home to the public in the exhaustive Times reports on the manoeuvres, which asserted

in this country, so far as our present experience goes, the advantage has always been with superior numbers and, as a rule, with the attack rather than the defence ... these points have been brought home clearly to any impartial observer who had not prejudiced his mind with the stock theory that a few half-trained men in the country hedgerows can hold a large force in check for a large period ... It would be of advantage if the advocates of half-trained troops for home defence could visit this part of England before the conclusion of the manoeuvres and see this for themselves.²

This development must have been especially galling to Strachey, who had for years been agitating for manoeuvres of this type, as well as the

"hedgerow defence." In contrast to his usual fulsome report on military exercises, he restricted himself to a small obscure paragraph in The

1. Balfour MSS. Op. Cit. ff. 219-221.

2. "The Army Manoeuvres." Times. 12 September 1904, p.5; See also 14 September 1904, p. 8.

Spectator in reporting the operation. He tried to recapture his case by arguing that the home defence army could take the offensive.

Because men are defending their own country they need not, and ought not to, stand only on the defensive. The surest form of defence is attack, and if an overseas invader is to be repelled, it will be only by using the enclosed land to worry him with constant attacks, the attacks on an invader should never cease from the moment he lands till his retreat to his ships.¹

The dismay of the home defence lobby was expressed even more vehemently by T. Miller Maguire, who mounted a strong attack on the "Metaphysical Man-
œuvres of a Phantom Army" in the United Service Magazine, which he described as

a few peregrinations in the East of England, devised by the dialecticians of the Ministry ... planned, not to train the soldiers but ... to play upon a credulous public - to give the people a show for their money - they want to know how their money is spent; well, most of it goes in nonsense like this. A HYPOTHETICAL INVASION. Invasion of what? England or Laputa or Timbuctoo? ... no power on earth will ever practice invasions under the Essex conditions - hence the Midsummer Night's comedy of the whole transaction.²

Maguire, like Strachey, believed that in real life, guerilla warfare would have broken out, leading to isolated delaying actions that would have pursued the invaders to their ships "in hot haste", and to surrender on the beach. Further, conditions of seapower would have prevented such an embarkation.

Would a landing of 12,000 or 60,000 men in England so depress the people as to cause panic and despair, as some critics remark? Yes, if they were directed by a Cabinet of word-splitters and metaphysicians and golf players, but not if they were directed and led by men.³

Maguire concluded with a final attack on "the new type of Orlando Furioso

1. Spectator. 17 September 1904. p. 379.

2. T.M. Maguire. Op. Cit. pp. 147-148.

3. Ibid. p. 150.

strategy, and on the windmill tactics of philosophers" and a Government of "pedantic golf-players, philosophic hair-splitters, ignoble, grasping lawyers, and title-hunting plutocrats."¹ It is doubtful whether Maguire's vehement attack upon the Cabinet was taken to heart by his victims, for Arnold-Forster observed on the occasion of the appearance of "another of MAGUIRES mad productions" that "we must be content to rely upon the good sense of young officers not to pay too much attention to the ravings of this poor creature, who has drunk his clever mind into one long fuddle."² But the incident shows the depth of feeling and resentment that existed in some quarters regarding the Cabinet's activities in solving the problem of invasion.

Owing to the complexities of the issues involved and the limitations of war-game conditions, the Clacton Manoeuvres were not as conclusive a testing laboratory as had been hoped. As in all manoeuvres there was a large element of make-believe, which critics on the scene were quick to point out. One of the chief areas of criticism was the landing itself. The Times emphasized that even under ideal conditions of weather and without opposition, stores had been lost and several horse-boats were wrecked. Its' main value had been to convince the foreign military attachés who had witnessed it of the difficulty of the invasion of England.³ A Spectator correspondent pointed out that any resistance from the shore would have made a landing completely impossible, as "the targets presented by the

1. T.M. Maguire. Op. Cit. pp. 153.

2. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50349) Diary, 10 July 1905. f. 49.

3. Times. 13 September 1904. p. 8.

crowded boats were such that no boats could have landed under concentrated fire."¹

Although the operations had provided insights into points of detail regarding disembarkation and tactics in close country, the effect of the Manoeuvres was to add fuel to the flames of the controversy rather than to resolve it. This was in part due to the magnitude and complexity of the military problems involved in overseas attack, which could hardly be resolved in the necessarily artificial conditions prevailing in manoeuvres. Furthermore, the semi-hostile attitude of the Admiralty prevented a truly combined operation which would have tested their assertion that they could guarantee the interception and destruction of any sizeable invasion force. But even so, the Clacton Manoeuvres represented a certain limited progress: Admiralty participation, however limited, had been secured, invasion tactics had been tested, and the efficacy of the "hedgerow defence" concept had been put in question. These represented certain limited gains, and the credit for them must go to Arnold-Forster, for he had been the prime mover behind the operations from their inception, and this represented his major contribution to the controversy over invasion.

However, the main opposition to the Government's invasion policy did not develop on the level of strategic and tactical controversy behind the scenes, but rather within the Houses of Parliament, for the strategic question of invasion could not be divorced from the political context. Balfour's Government, although it had been successful in its strategic reforms within the secret councils of the C.I.D., was in an extremely

1. Reginald Lucas. "The Lesson of the Essex Manoeuvres." Spectator.
17 September 1904. p. 391.

precarious political position, owing to its increasing unpopularity and a series of splits in the party brought about by Chamberlain's campaign for Imperial Preference. The Government could not afford to alienate the large force of Members of Parliament who were connected with the various Auxiliary Forces, whose raison d'être was invasion. The Yeomanry, Militia, and Volunteers had all been swollen in size as a result of the Boer War and the 1900 invasion scare, and the large establishments had been perpetuated under Broderick's administration at the War Office, from 1901 to 1903. The result was a large, articulate and politically-powerful special interest lobby in the House of Commons, which stood in the way of the Government's desire to extend the ramifications of the C.I.D.'s conclusion on invasion to the actual reshaping of the Regular Army and the Auxiliary Forces. The home defence lobby had already raised the ire of Sir John Fisher, during his labours on the War Office Reconstitution Committee. Admiral Fisher had complained repeatedly in his letters of the unenlightened attitude of the "80 'Military Mercenaries' in the House of Commons" as well as "the unholy alliance of Tommy Bowles, Winston Churchill, and other notoriety hunters" who had opposed reforms suggested by the Committee.¹

The War Office also found the home defence lobby irritating and embarrassing. Both Arnold-Forster and Lord Roberts were committed to reduce the size of the Auxiliary Forces on the assumption that invasion was impossible, and that only small raids need be provided against.² Roberts especially believed that the Volunteers had grossly declined in military

1. Balfour MSS. (49710) Fisher to J. Sanders. 10 January 1904; 20 January 1904.

2. Roberts MSS. Case X20931. A2/2. R4/13. Roberts on "Estimates." 22 November 1903.

power and usefulness since their revival in 1859.

... the conditions of warfare have materially changed. Untrained men who could have held their own when troops were massed, and they had the strong support of their comrades, could not be trusted to fight by themselves in the extended formation necessitated by long-ranging weapons, and in my opinion, could not be safely entrusted with the defence of this country.¹

Both Arnold-Forster and Roberts were agreed that future policy would be built on "increased efficiency with a sacrifice of numbers", which meant smaller, but better-trained Auxiliary formations that would be competent to deal with enemy raids.² Roberts told Spencer Wilkinson, the great Volunteer advocate who was the Military Correspondent of the Morning Post, that "It would be better to have half the present number of properly trained men" rather than the existing collection of enthusiastic but ill-trained amateur troops.³ In Parliament, Liberal Imperialists of the stamp of Grey, Haldane, Asquith, and later Churchill, who had developed an appreciation for imperial strategy from the speeches of Sir Charles Dilke and other Blue Water teachers, effectively mingled the traditional Liberal outcry for economy and reform with a new appreciation for strategic necessities.

This was the House of Commons to which Arnold-Forster presented his first Army Estimates in March, 1904. He emphasized the fact that his proposals had been based on the C.I.D.'s decision on invasion, saying

One great step has been taken. The Prime Minister has laid down a policy which he believed was accepted by nine-tenths of the House as to the functions of the Army. That policy was that the functions of the Army was primarily to conduct

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1. Strachey MSS. "1903-1904". Roberts to Strachey, 20 April 1903.
 2. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50300) "No.3 Memorandum." 8 December 1903. pp. 10-11.
 3. Wilkinson MSS. Roberts to Wilkinson. 28 January 1902. See also 24 November 1901.

military operations across the seas, and that we need not anticipate serious danger from an invading force so long as our Navy was kept up to its proper strength. That was an enormous contribution to the solution of the problem.¹

Balfour followed, with an account of the founding of the C.I.D. and its work, which had finally led to a solution of the vexatious problem of invasion.

.. the invasion of this island by a large regular force, capable of undertaking its conquest, is, if our home forces are kept in anything like an adequate state, and above all, if the Navy is kept in anything like an adequate state - for after all this is really a naval question ... is a dream, an illusory danger, and not one of the contingencies against which it would be right and proper to ask this country to make costly provision.²

It is to be noted that Balfour was careful to refer both to the home defence forces and the Navy as defences against invasion, for he believed that both services had a share in deterring possible overseas attacks.

Arnold-Forster began to develop his plans for reforming the Auxiliary Forces and to bring them in line with the C.I.D.'s decision that invasion was not a serious danger, as well as with political pressures for economy and efficiency. His military advisors were agreed as to the poor state of the Volunteers. Brigadier General James Grierson, the Director of Military Operations, commented

There are good units and bad units, but the best are not fitted by their training in field duties or in musketry to place in the field against Continental troops ... the discipline of the force is more or less that of a football team, i.e., it lasts so long as it pleases the members to maintain it. The men are in many cases too young, mere children of 16 and 17 being taken ... there are far too many Volunteers for our requirements, and they are wrongly distributed over the country.³

1. Hansard. (Commons). 9 March 1904, cols. 606-607.

2. Ibid. col. 623.

3. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50300) "Replies to Question as to the existing strength and efficiency of the Military Forces.." by J.M. Grierson, D.M.O. 12 March 1904. p. 6.

Arnold-Forster's long awaited speech on army reform on July 14, 1904, referred to the discouraging finding of the Norfolk Commissioners, that the Militia and Volunteers were "unfit to take the field".¹ Arnold-Forster charged that the Volunteer Force was providing little of defensive value for the money expended on them. Brodrick had expanded the Establishment of the Force to 347,000 men. But the actual strength of the force had dwindled steadily, by the beginning of 1904, to 240,000. Arnold-Forster announced that he intended to reduce this number even further.

... nobody can contend that the efficiency of the force is in excess of what is required for war. A reduction of the numbers and an increase in the efficiency are obviously indicated. It is proposed to reduce the establishment of the Volunteers to 200,000, and the present strength to 180,000, in other words, to reduce the force by one-fourth.²

The new establishment of 180,000 Volunteers would be divided into two classes. The bulk of Government help and training would go to the 60,000 first-class Volunteers, who would be prepared as the first line of defence against raids, "formed and organized into units capable of taking the field properly officered, provided with transport, guns, etc." and who would be "absorbed into higher field formations with Yeomanry, Artillery, and Engineers."³

However, even before this new policy had been announced, rumours of impending reductions had awakened resistance to the scheme within the House of Commons. Sir Howard Vincent, a former Volunteer Colonel and a self-appointed protector of the Force, wrote a long series of letters to the

1. Parliamentary Papers: Reports from Commissioners, 1904. Vol. XXX. Cd. 2061. "Report of the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers." p.16.

2. J.K. Dunlop. The Development of the British Army 1899-1914. pp. 182-183.

3. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50300) "Volunteers." 28 March 1904. f. 100; "Principles involved in Scheme of Army Reform." 12 May 1904. f. 142-144.

Times on behalf of the Volunteers,¹ pressed the Prime Minister to receive a deputation of aggrieved M.P.s who were also holders of Auxiliary Commissions, and opened a long and querulous correspondence with Arnold-Forster over the future of the threatened Volunteers.² He was joined by some powerful allies; The Daily Express and The Spectator lamented over the fate of the "Menaced Volunteers." Strachey entered a plea for increased numbers, as well as improved organization on the lines of the Norfolk Commission, and published an open letter by Sir Howard Vincent.³ At the same time, the House of Lords staged a long debate on behalf of the Yeomanry in protest against a supposed reduction of 7,000 men.⁴

The Norfolk Commission Report itself rekindled the home defence controversy, as it laid bare the lamentable conditions of the Auxiliary Forces, and contained a recommendation by the majority of the Commissioners for a conscript army of 380,000 for home defence.⁵ The Times believed that "the majority of the Commissioners have allowed themselves to be quite unduly dominated by the great spectre of a great invasion."⁶ Arnold-Forster was asked, in the Commons, to pledge "that nothing will be done to reduce Auxiliary Forces ... before the whole scheme of alteration has been discussed in this House and the efficiency of consequent reduction of "expenditure considered."⁷ Balfour was asked the Government's views on the

1. Times 7 May 1904, p. 5; 12 May 1904, p.14; 24 May 1904, p.9; 30 May 1904, p.10.

2. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50338) 4 May 1904. ff. 26-28.

3. "The Fate of the Volunteers." Spectator. 14 May 1904. p. ; "The Government and the Auxiliaries." Ibid. 2 July 1904. pp. 6-7.

4. Hansard. (Lords) 19 May 1904. cols. 310-320.

5. Cd. 2061.pp. 15-16.

6. Times, 28 May 1904. p. 11; 30 May 1904, p.10.

7. Hansard. (Commons) 1 June 1904; cols. 498-499.

Norfolk Commission's recommendation of conscription, and he dissociated the Government from the proposal.¹ A lecture by Carylton Bellairs, a retired naval officer and M.P., at the R.U.S.I. on the subject of "Standards of Strength for Imperial Defence", attracted an eminent audience. Besides Sir Edward Grey in the Chair; Sir George Clarke, the Secretary of the C.I.D., Sir John Colomb, Lord Brassey, Lt. Col. F.W. Maude, Colonel Eustace Balfour, and eminent members of the National Service League, all represented various viewpoints in the invasion controversy. Bellairs argued that if the Navy could safeguard the country against invasion, no soldier had any right to deal with the question, and asserted that the Auxiliary Forces already cost as much as all British battleships in home and Mediterranean waters. Bellairs stated that conscription would prove so costly that one year's expenses - £10½ million - would serve to provide the nation 64 battleships. Furthermore, the last Army Estimates had devoted over £4½ - millions to home defence, which had mostly been absorbed by "sedentary" garrisons.²

That same day, the Lords again took up the cause of the Auxiliary Forces in debate. Lord Wemyss, an octogenarian who had been active in home defence forces for over 45 years, moved:

That in the opinion of this House any scheme of Army reorganisation that does away with the militia force is contrary to sound policy destroying as it does the ancient constitutional foundation of our existing military policy.³

1. Hansard (Commons). 6 June 1904, cols. 805-6.

2. Lt. Carylton Bellairs. "The Standard of Strength for Imperial Defence." R.U.S.I. Journal. September 1904. pp. 997-1002, 1007.

3. J.K. Dunlop, Op. Cit. pp. 183-184.

Government spokesmen reiterated the Government's determination to employ "the auxiliary forces as an integral part of the Army, relying on them largely for purposes of home defence." Only unnecessary and incomplete units would be abolished.¹ On August 2nd, the Commons considered the C.I.D. budget for the coming year. Strategists and reformers, such as Sir Charles Dilke and Sir John Colomb, welcomed the fact that the Government were dealing with their military requirements according to a definite strategic principle.² In his reply Balfour made some illuminating comments on the C.I.D. decision on invasion.

That report will remain on record for the benefit of our successors, not indeed to bind them, but as a basis upon which they can make their own investigations upon a subject which changes from year to year, and on which no final conclusions ought even to be admitted, but which with the due revision which doubtless it will receive in years to come will, I think, always be ultimately based upon the conclusions at which we have arrived.³

This statement revealed Balfour at his best: his inter-party approach to questions of national defence, his appreciation of the flexibility and plastic nature of strategic situations, and his realization of the importance of the precedent which had been established. In its breadth and flexibility of approach, it represented the antithesis to the attitude of the Government's critics.

Six days later, August 8th 1904, the first full debate took place over Arnold-Forster's proposed reforms and lasted two days. Arnold-Forster reasserted his basic argument: reduction was required both in cost and numbers of the home army, which a competent body had declared was unfit to take the field against a foreign army. Many of the audience welcomed his

1. Times. 28 June 1904. p. 9.

2. Hansard. (Commons) 2 August 1904. cols. 605-608, 615-617.

3. Ibid. col. 620.

4. Ibid. 8 August 1904. cols. 1382-1396.

ideas: Lord George Hamilton, a former First Lord, Winston Churchill, Sir Charles Dilke, and Mr. Asquith all commended his proposals in general, although with some specific reservations.¹ But the Volunteer lobby was noisy with protest. Sir Lee Knowles, a Volunteer officer, quoted Wolseley, Napoleon, and Wellington on the perils of invasion, while Captain Norton deplored the abominable treatment of the Militia and advocated conscription for home defence. Mr. Guest suggested instead that the Regular Army might be reduced, in order that more funds might be available for the Militia and Volunteers.² This was the situation when Parliament was prorogued on August 15. Stalemate had resulted, owing to the political power of the Militia and Volunteer lobbies in the Lords and Commons, and their inability to see beyond their own immediate interest. Arnold-Forster complained to Balfour that "we cannot touch a single unit appropriated to Home Defence without rousing the screams of half the House of Commons, and setting up a violent local irritation all over the country."³ A passage from Arnold-Forster's Diary illustrates the gulf between the Government reformers and their critics.

Had a long meeting with the Volunteer Officers of both Houses, For the most part they were very friendly, and I think the meeting distinctly did good. HOWARD VINCENT of course is "an Ass" and really cannot help it, and posing as the representative of all Volunteers, will oppose anything and everything. But I don't know that he matters very much. I asked him point blank whether he opposed reduction because he disagreed with the view of the Defence Committee, and of the Government, and deliberately believed that it was necessary or desirable to keep an enormous force of troops at home in this country to resist an invasion in force? He simply declined to answer, as indeed did all the others. While practically all those present were friendly, very few of them were really informed,

1. Hansard (Commons) 8 August 1904. cols. 1410-1418, 1426-1432.

2. Ibid. cols. 1445, 1455, 1461.

3. Balfour MSS. (49723) Arnold-Forster to Balfour. 13 January 1905.

or regarded the question as anything more than one which concerned the comfort and well being of the particular Volunteer Corps to which they belonged or with which they had been connected. The idea of regarding it as having anything to do with the safety of the country or the defence of the Empire never seemed to have crossed their minds. As usual, they all contradicted each other.¹

This was by no means a unique experience for Arnold-Forster. On another occasion he had invited Lord Harris, a defender of the Militia in the Upper House, to a talk at the War Office and afterwards commented

He has evidently never thought the problem out at all. I pointed out that we had already far more men than we wanted, and that if our men had to fight anybody in their own country, their opponents would be the best troops in Europe; that nothing would persuade me that we could fight other people's best with our worst. I think he was only half persuaded, but I don't believe he had ever approached the problem in a rational way before.²

The impasse was not helped by the delicate political position of the Government, which dictated a policy of cautious approach to military reform. This the activist and energetic Arnold-Forster found increasingly frustrating, and as the months passed, he became much less tactful and more outspoken.

In March 1905 he confided to his diary that he had received

a long letter from HOWARD VINCENT abusing me about the Volunteers. He is a "tiresome ass", absolutely incapable of comprehending any view of the British Army which is not taken from the standpoint of the Queen's Westminster (a Volunteer Regiment commanded by Vincent until 1900) and the glorification of Sir H.V.³

Afterwards, Arnold-Forster unburdened himself in a letter to a friend.

... If the whole population were armed with repeating rifles, hand grenades and yataghans, and were trained to the perfection of the 10th Legion, they could not avert the ruin of this country if an enemy held possession of the sea.⁴

1. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50339) Diary, 25 July 1904. f. 78.

2. Ibid. (50342) 5 December 1904.

3. Ibid. (50345) 3 March 1905.

4. Ibid. Arnold-Forster to General Sir Ian Hamilton. 3 March 1905. f. 19. Arnold-Forster used similar language in Parliament. See Hansard (HC) 28 March 1905. col. 1405.

Arnold-Forster's tendency to exasperation was a source of concern to Esher, who counselled Balfour

None of these difficulties would arise if dear A.F. were muzzled and forced to administer. He ought to have an iron mask such as Louis XIV fashioned for his twin brother, according to the immortal Dumas.¹

Yet Arnold-Forster's difficulties were not all of his own making, for, as he confided to Sir John Fisher,

my difficulty was that the country insisted on my keeping up two Armies: one on the assumption that we had got a Navy, the other on the assumption that we had not. I had to find money to pay for both.²

The new year began inauspiciously. Attacks upon Arnold-Forster's scheme were launched in both the Lords and Commons. Sir Howard Vincent "regretted there was nothing with reference to the Army in the Speech from the Throne, especially with reference to the Militia and Volunteers," and called for an end to "the present suspense, which was operating so seriously on the efficiency" of the Auxiliary forces.³ A debate was launched in the Lords on the reorganization of the Militia on February 21,⁴ and the next day the Volunteer lobby in the Commons began two days of obstructionist oratory. Captain Norton nostalgically recalled Brodrick's huge home defence establishment, and lamented the "destruction of our great constitutional force, the Militia, and the dismemberment, and disorganization of our great Volunteer force..⁵ Major J.E.B. Seeley branded the proposed Volunteer

1. Balfour MSS. (49718) Esher to J. Sanders, 12 December 1904.

2. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50343) 26 January 1905. f. 114.

3. Hansard. (Commons) 14 February 1905. cols. 140-141.

4. Ibid. (Lords) 21 February 1905. cols. 725-751.

5. Ibid. (Commons). 22 February 1905. col. 914.

reductions as "a culmination of the follies" perpetrated by the Government,¹ while Sir Howard Vincent delivered another long speech in fulsome praise of the Volunteers, as "It was only by this means that the country could be rendered safe against invasion."² Mr. McCrae complained that the reforms would return the Auxiliary Force to the level of expenditure of 1895-96. The Government, he asserted, was bent on smashing the Volunteers in order to pave the way for conscription.³ Other speakers accused the War Office of "their old professional contempt for the amateur", who had connived to confine the retrenchment to the Auxiliary Forces, and restrict British military strength to the all-too-narrow basis of the Regulars and 60,000 "semi-professional Volunteers."⁴ Complaints were raised of the years of contempt and snubs received by the Auxiliary troops from their professional brethren, and the Volunteers were once again praised as "the defence of our hearths and homes."⁵

The second day of debate opened resoundingly with a proposed Amendment to the Address, to the effect that

the continuous and continuing changes in the War Office are destructive of the best interests of your Majesty's Army, have gravely disordered the system upon which the Regular Forces at home and abroad are raised and trained, have discouraged the Militia and Volunteers, and disclose negligence and mismanagement on the part of your Majesty's Ministers ...⁶

1. Hansard (Commons). 22 February 1905. cols. 921-922.

2. Ibid. col. 931.

3. Ibid. col. 936.

4. Ibid. Mr. Wylie. col. 942.

5. Ibid. cols. 943-961

6. Ibid. 23 February 1905. col. 1113.

In support of the motion, Colonel Welby announced that "100,000 Auxiliaries trained, organized, and equipped, on an equality with Continental soldiers, ready to repel invasion", would banish forever the perils of conscription.¹ Other speakers continued in similar vein. Sir John Colomb, speaking over the interruptions of the Volunteer lobby, remarked that anyone listening to the debate "would have supposed that the Navy did not exist."² Arnold-Forster used a similar argument in his defence against the agitation which had "occupied the whole attention of the House during these two days." and said

I have been astonished to find that two not unimportant parts of our military forces have been almost entirely left out of sight. I dimly realized from one or two references that were made that we had a Regular Army. I did not realize and I heard nothing to make me realize, that we had a Navy.³

Yet the parochial viewpoint of the home defence lobbyists and their allies almost prevailed over the Government, and the motion of censure was narrowly defeated by 254 to 207. The Government, however, was allowed little respite, for a second attack was mounted during the debate of the Army Estimates during March in both the Lords and Commons. The critics were also beginning to concentrate on the critical question as to how many men were required for the defence of the country, which the Government repeatedly failed to answer.⁴ Three times during March one of the Volunteer lobby, Colonel Welby, pressed the Government for an authoritative calculation of the number of troops required to repel invasion.⁵ Balfour's replies were

1. Hansard (Commons). cols. 1116.

2. Ibid. cols. 1117-1200, 1138-1158, 1164-1166.

3. Ibid. col. 1177.

4. Ibid. col. 1135.

5. Ibid. 7 March 1905, col. 595; 14 March 1905, col. 1393-1394; 21 March 1905, col. 666.

extremely uninformative. He refused to accept the figure of 330,000 for home defence recommended by the Norfolk Commission, or to give an opinion in the form of a Question and Answer.

Arnold-Forster's speech introducing the 1905 Army Estimates was generally subdued in tone, but constituted one final attempt to educate his critics in modern strategy and an inter-service approach to national defence.

If it is true, as we are told by representatives of the Admiralty, that the Navy is in a position such as it has never occupied before, that it is now not only our front line of defence but our guarantee for the possession of our own islands, is this to make no difference to a system which has grown up avowedly and confessedly on the basis of defending these islands by an armed force against invasion? Is that to make no difference? Is this view some invention of my imagination? No, Sir, that is the deliberate conclusion of the Government advised by a body that has been called into, I believe, a useful existence during the last 18 months, and which I regret was not called into existence much longer ago, The Committee of Defence. I have seen it stated that, provided our Navy is sufficient, the greatest anticipation we can form in the way of a landing of a hostile army would be a force of 5,000. I should be deceiving the House if I thought that represented the extreme Naval view. The extreme Naval view is that the crew of a dinghy could not land in this country in the face of the Navy.¹

This last statement in fact had been expressed by Admiral Fisher at the C.I.D., and it later caused much misunderstanding among those who thought that Arnold-Forster had adopted this viewpoint himself. He went on to describe the Clacton Manoeuvres and how its experiences had verified the findings of the C.I.D. He had himself witnessed, and wished his critics had witnessed the scene

off Clacton Beach, eight ships of war and a number of transports trying to land 13,000 men - which they did in two days - and embarking them again in four days. I wish they had tried to

1. Hansard (Commons). 28 March 1905. cols. 1403-1404.

picture, as I did, what would have happened one hour after dark, with the Medway flotilla of destroyers fifteen miles in one direction and the Harwich flotilla of destroyers fifteen miles in another - with these great men-of-war and transports swinging at anchor. I do not think I misinterpret the belief of any single officer, naval or military, who has thought of this question when I say there would not be a single one of those ships at anchor or upon the sea next morning.¹

The only alternative to naval power such as this was conscription, which would mean putting the entire population into the line of battle to resist the invaders, who would of necessity be the best-trained troops available in Europe.

Yet Arnold-Forster's speech hardly had the desired effect on the House of Commons. Mr. Winston Churchill protested that the logical conclusion of such a policy would be to abolish the Volunteers altogether rather than reduce their numbers. The usual representatives of the Volunteer lobby: Sir Howard Vincent, Colonel Welby, Major Seeley, and Gibson Bowles, presented the now-familiar arguments in favour of the Force. It was a bastion against conscription, a "valuable protection against recurrent panics", and the expression of the "fighting spirit of the race."² The Government's faith in naval supremacy was ridiculed, and dark references were made to the possibility of a sudden and unexpected future attack such as the recent Dogger Bank incident.³ It was rapidly becoming obvious that the home defence lobby was not only incapable of understanding the Govern-

1. Hansard (Commons). 28 March 1905. col. 1406.

2. Ibid. 3 April 1905. cols. 214-215, 245.

3. Ibid. col. 239. In October 1904 the Russian Baltic fleet, en route to its defeat in the Far East, had opened fire on British fishing boats in the belief that they were Japanese torpedo craft. Feeling ran very high in England, and it briefly looked as though war would ensue.

ment's case for a national strategy, they did not wish to understand it. The debate continued for two days, being mainly concerned with petty details and local issues.¹

Balfour resolved to make one final authoritative pronouncement which would present the Government's policy on home defence to Parliament and to the nation. His advisors behind the scenes had been putting pressure on him for the last year to publish his C.I.D. Memorandum on invasion. Esher was in favour of such a move,² and Arnold-Forster had, in a meeting of the C.I.D., advocated a public announcement of its conclusions over invasion.³ Sir John Fisher was so concerned over the invasion agitation that he wrote to Balfour's secretary at four in the morning.

Sleepless till I have prayed you to go on your bended knees to your dear Master and entreated him to ... Instantly publish his great paper on Invasion and say the Aldershot Force (is) all that is wanted so reduce Home Army ... Cehazi! if you don't tell your Master these truths - you will be turned into a leper as white as snow and we'll sweep the country with the Cry "Down with Balfour and his Bloated Army..."⁴

Fisher extended his criticism to the cost of the "Auxiliary Forces, 4½ millions - absurd - the Volunteers, 2 millions - still more absurd."⁵

The occasion Balfour chose was the debate on the C.I.D. Estimates on May 11, 1905, which would permit both naval and military matters to be discussed freely, as well as principles of higher strategy. His speech was

1. Hansard (Commons.) 4 April 1905. cols. 340-376; 6 April 1905, cols. 678, 714-719.

2. Esher. Journals and Letters. Vol. I. Diary, 20 June 1904, p.55.

3. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50342) 8 March 1905. f. 38.

4. Balfour MSS. (49710) Fisher to J. Sanders. 29 July 1904, f. 150.

5. A.J. Marder. Fear God and Dread Nought. Vol.I. Fisher to Balfour, ca. 30 July 1904. p. 321.

a definitive apologetic for the work of the C.I.D. The first of its three main sections, devoted to home defence, took up over half of the speech. Balfour began with an historical exposition of the invasion problem, and his interest in and enjoyment of the subject was such that it was commented upon by his audience.¹ His account of the C.I.D. inquiry into invasion omitted nothing of significance: the tradition of disagreement between the two services, the use of a specific hypothesis based upon the home defence situation of March 1900 in concert with the worst conceivable naval situation, the importance of steam, telegraphy, torpedoes, and submarines as adjuncts to the defence, the figure of 70,000 as the smallest possible force with which London could be taken, and the final crushing difficulty of the disembarkation, owing to British submarines and torpedo boats. Balfour explained

... we have really endeavoured to put to ourselves the problem in a very concrete form. We have not gone into generalities about the command of the sea or the superiority of our Fleet, or this difficulty or that difficulty; we have endeavoured to picture to ourselves a clear issue which is very unfavourable to this country, and have shown at least to our satisfaction that on that hypothesis, unfavourable as it is, serious invasion of these islands is not an eventuality which we need seriously consider ... I have to-day put forward in adequate outline, what I have endeavoured to embody in the memorandum which will be available to any gentleman who follows in office.²

What emerged more clearly in the course of the Prime Minister's speech, more clearly than ever before, was a stronger emphasis upon the roles of both services in home defence. Balfour was careful to state that "we assume that there are home defences, and it is necessary that we should assume that there are home^{land} defences."³

1. Hansard (Commons). Mr. Campbell-Bannerman. 11 May 1905. col. 86.

2. Ibid. cols. 76-77.

3. Ibid. col. 71.

He dissociated himself from Blue Water orthodoxy, with its emphasis on the capital ship and the big naval battle, and instead invoked

the torpedo and the submarine which must qualify the extreme doctrine of the command of the sea which used to be held, and perhaps is sometimes still held by the so-called blue-water school.¹

Balfour believed that battleships no longer commanded the seas close to the shore, for "no strength in battleships has the slightest effect in diminishing the number of hostile torpedo craft and submarines" - these represented a completely different category of naval strength.

The speech was an amazingly frank and complete account of the C.I.D. investigations, so much so that in one respect - its revelation that France had been assumed as the hypothetical enemy - drew a sharp reaction from his audience. The Agadir Crisis just then was at its height, and the issue of Franco-British friendship was a sensitive one. Campbell-Bannerman, although otherwise full of praise, felt that this aspect of the speech "was a little overdone" and might "in evil hands, and especially if dealt with by evil pens, do harm to the relations between the two countries."² Other M.P.s expressed similar misgivings. But the balance of the speech was well received, and the reaction of the majority was expressed by Campbell-Bannerman, who congratulated Balfour on having "greatly pacified the alarms of our country with regard to our own shores." Mr. James Bryce, the eminent historian and Chief Secretary, Mr. Haldane, Sir Charles Dilke, and Sir John Colomb also were full of praise.³ Colomb, especially, was encouraged, and saw Balfour's pronouncement as the climax of his own long campaign to

1. Hansard (Commons). 11 May 1905. col. 72.

2. Ibid. col. 86; Mr. Gibson Bowles, col. 110.

3. Ibid. cols. 84-87, 108-109, 118-121, 99-100, 89-92.

educate the nation in strategic principles.

... the great advantage of his speech today would be its educational effect on the minds of the House and the country. His rt. hon. friend had focused this question in so perfect a manner, bringing it within the understanding of the meanest capacity in the country, and had thereby advanced in a true direction towards a common-sense understanding by the people ... He rejoiced at having lived to hear an explicit statement from a Prime Minister upon principles of policy, giving clear and distinct reasons why those principles should be followed.¹

However, Colomb had over-estimated "the meanest capacity in the country."

for the home defence lobby gave further evidence of their monumental capacity for misapprehension. Major Seeley expressed doubt that the C.I.D. conclusions were unimpeachable, recalled Balfour's 1902 remark that the experts were always wrong, and referred to the many letters he had received from constituents in the last few days protesting against the dwindling size of the Militia, Volunteers, and Yeomanry. The C.I.D., he ^{im}plausibly asserted, heaped scorn on the Volunteer principle as well as conscription.² Colonel Sandys announced that the C.I.D.'s policy had not carried to conviction to his mind, and outlined visions of foreign marauders landing, thousands at a time, in Northern Scotland, Wales and Eastern England.³

Public reaction to Balfour's speech was equally mixed. The Times hailed it as an important precedent: for the first time in Parliamentary history, the Commons had discussed national defence with references to both services. As had Colomb, the Times incorrectly regarded the speech as a triumph for the Blue Water School, and assumed that the mere enunciation of sound strategic principles would serve to put the policy into effect, and

1. Hansard (Commons). 11 May 1905. cols. 91-92.

2. Ibid. cols. 128-129; 140-141.

3. Ibid. cols. 147-148.

to prevail over all the numerous political obstacles. Its first leader read:

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the importance of this conclusion. It takes the problem of invasion and its possibility out of the region of opinion, conjecture, and controversy, and makes its negative solution the pivot of our defensive policy. Henceforth it is to be the Navy on which we are to rely, as we always have relied and not in vain, for the protection of these shores against the invader, and whatever we want an army for, it is not for the protection of our hearths and homes.¹

The Times leader, as well as Colomb's speech, revealed the shortcomings of the Blue Water philosophy. Both had missed the subtleties of Balfour's position and his divergence from the orthodox navalist argument: he had based England's immunity from invasion not upon the capital ships of the fleet, but on second-line torpedo craft. Equally significant was their failure to grasp that Balfour had laid out an interservice responsibility for home defence. A third and fatal failing was a naive faith in the power of education and common-sense reasoning of the British public to accept strategic truths, that certainly did not correspond to the political history of the previous decade.

Even in the Times itself, Balfour's speech was opposed by the Military Correspondent, Charles A Court Repington. Repington published an article on May 15th which expressed skepticism on several points of Balfour's argument, not least that

it fails to give sufficient prominence to the traditions, ideals, plans, and purposes of our eventual enemies, and for that reason is not a complete statement of the problem before us.²

This argument which Repington had employed before, during his career in the

1. Times. 12 May 1905. p. 9.

2. "Parliament and Imperial Defence." Ibid. 15 May 1905. p.7.

Military Intelligence Department, overlooked the fact that the psychology of the enemy meant nothing if he lacked the physical capacity to put his plans into effect. While admitting that invasion was the most difficult military operation imaginable, Repington went on to pick at a number of technical points in Balfour's argument. Repington referred to a recent Japanese landing in Russian Asia which had been made without the loss of a single man, neglecting to mention that the disembarkation was not opposed and that the role of the Russian fleet in the Pacific was scarcely analogous to that of the Royal Navy in home waters. Repington called upon Balfour to revise his speech before publishing it. Letters appeared in the Times reasserting arguments that Balfour had failed to deal with all possible contingencies, and that the speech would have "a too soporific effect on the nation."¹

Repington was not the only journalist opposed to the Government policy. Spencer Wilkinson, the Military Correspondent of the Morning Post, who had been one of the Norfolk Commissioners, as well as a long-time defender of the Volunteer Force, considered Balfour's speech "a national calamity."² He did not share Balfour's faith in sea power, and thought he had dealt with the threat of invasion in a trifling and superficial manner, which had neglected to consider a war involving all the Great Powers.³ H.A. Gwynne, editor of The Standard, wrote to a friend at the War Office that he would continue to propagate the idea of invasion in his paper to bring home the idea of war to the people, admitting that "I go rather beyond perhaps the extreme probabilities of the case because I want to rouse England to the

1. Times. 19 May 1905. p. 4.

2. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. Spencer Wilkinson to Roberts. 15 July 1905.

3. Wilkinson MSS. SW/47. undated typescript, probably 1905.

fact that she is in danger."¹ Strachey of the Spectator began his report of the speech with the comment that "in spite of its brilliance and suggestiveness; it constitutes a not inconsiderable danger to the state ...". Strachey, like so many others, was repelled by the idea "of laying down general principles and acting upon them."

The danger was not to the state, but rather to their own special interests. The publicists were already strongly committed to various programmes for a home army and paramilitary forces, which the Government's strategic policy made redundant. Clear principles were embarrassing to them, for their various schemes depended upon a sense of national insecurity. Strachey spoke for all those with a special interest in home defence.

We shall be unworthy of ourselves if we are content to be lulled into a sense of false security by the windy consolations of abstract propositions. Let us remember that Mr. Balfour has altered nothing by declaring that we cannot be invaded, and that the painful and wearisome task of securing the safety of the Empire by an adequate military preparation still lies before us.²

When upbraided by one of his readers for not recognizing the value of freedom from the incubus of invasion, and lack of faith in the efficacy of seapower, Strachey replied that the Prime Minister should not have shown that the Navy was the nation's chief defence against invasion, as though another course was open to him. Both Repington and Strachey criticised the speech for giving comfort to those who were agitating for radical reductions in Army expenditure.³ Arnold-Forster in turn found the invasion publicists personally reprehensible, and singled out Repington and Wilkinson

1. Kitchener. MSS. H.A. Gwynne to Col. Marker. 16 May 1905.
2. "Mr. Balfour's Speech on Imperial Defence." Spectator. 20 May 1905, p. 737.
3. Ibid. 27 May 1905. p. 781.
Balfour MSS. (49718) Repington to Escher. 18 May 1905. ff. 203-204.

as "two most persistent and malicious writers whose views never go beyond their own cast iron formulas."¹

The situation suggests that the home defence enthusiasts did not so much believe in invasion as in their own remedies against it. Balfour's speech upset the status quo, and few of them proved equal to the challenge of thinking other than in their own limited frame of reference and pet projects. Emotion, intuition, and prejudice prevailed over reason and analysis. Balfour's speech, rather than converting or silencing the advocates of the Volunteers or Militia, and various home defence projects, seems to have spurred them on to further exertions. On May 15, pressure was applied for a debate on the Volunteers in the Commons. Questions were again asked regarding the number of troops required for home defence under the C.I.D. policy, as well as the place of the Volunteers in that defence.² On that same day, Lord Wemyss attempted to have the Duke of Wellington's 1847 letter on the perils of invasion published and circulated to the House of Lords. On being advised that the letter had already been repeatedly published, and described a situation of 58 years before, Wemyss replied that "He suspected that the Government did not wish the noble' duke's arguments to be put into their Lordship's hands", withdrew his motion for publication, and amidst the cheers of the House, announced he would publish the letter at his own expense.³

The tragi-comic resistance continued in the House of Lords. On July 10, Lord Wemyss brought forward a resolution on national defence which was

1. Arnold-Forster MCS. (50352) Diary, 13 November 1905. f. 86.

2. Hansard. (Commons). 15 May 1905. cols. 262-263.

3. Times. 16 May 1905. p. 6.

so garbled that Sir George Clarke, the Secretary of the C.I.D., told Balfour that "The motion, as it stands, would, if carried, confirm an absolute impossibility."¹ In support of his motion, Lord Wemyss read their Lordships passages from a German novel entitled The Coming Conquest of England, which pictured 60,000 Germans landing in the Firth of Forth while French and Russians march into London.² Other diverting scenes and statements took place before Lord Roberts delivered a more significant speech on Imperial Defence, in which, however, no reference at all was made to the possibility of raid and invasion.³ Lords Newton and Ripon, however, supported Wemyss with the usual arguments,⁴ and Lord Ellenborough attacked Balfour over his failure to consider the potential of Germany as a possible invader. Germany, he claimed, had nine powerful harbours and a gross steam tonnage which was twice that of France. Ellenborough had also taken the trouble to visit Clacton Beach, Admiralty chart in hand, and raised the possibility that enemy transports might run themselves aground on the beach, which would render them impervious to torpedo attack and allow them to land their troops with less trouble and time.⁵

The Government had two strong defenders in Lord Donoughmore, the Under-Secretary of State for War, and Lord Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary. Lansdowne patiently pointed out the misunderstandings of Wemyss and his allies: the Prime Minister had not relied on the Navy alone for home defence, but had also specifically mentioned the need for a home defence

1. Balfour MSS. (49701) Clarke to Balfour. 8 July 1905.

2. Hansard (Lords) 10 July 1905. cols. 4-12.

3. Ibid. col. 13.

4. Ibid. cols. 33-36, 44-47.

5. Ibid. cols. 19-23.

force. Wemyss and his supporters had apparently assumed, without reading Balfour's speech, that he had utterly abolished the Militia and Volunteers. Nor was the Government a party to the "dinghy school" which believed that not more than five invaders could land on British soil. Lansdowne commented frostily, "We are, I think, entitled to beg that when our opinions are quoted in this House, they may be quoted with some approach to accuracy."¹ The Government saw nothing to oppose in Wemyss' motion, and thus it was passed. Three days later in the Commons, Sir Howard Vincent and his colleagues succeeded in having a special debate on the Volunteer vote for the first time in four years. The usual arguments were invoked by the usual protagonists, who inveighed against the "years of ridicule and discouragement" suffered by the Volunteers, and the "immature schemes" and "hypocritical strangulation" directed toward the Force by the Government, which represented "an attempt to smash up the Volunteer force and pave the way for conscription."²

A few speakers, however, showed signs that they had understood the Government case. Mr. Charles Hobhouse recognised that Arnold-Forster had been at least "frank, consistent, and constant" in maintaining that official policy looked to the Volunteers for defence against raids.³ Major Evans Gordon complained of the time given to discussion of the Volunteers which was out of all proportion to their relative importance, and out of sympathy with sentiment in the actual force itself.⁴ But these excursions into the realm of common-sense were the exception, and the occasion

1. Hansard. (Lords) 10 July 1905. col. 38.

2. Ibid. (Commons). 13 July 1905. cols. 580-596.

3. Ibid. col. 601.

4. Ibid. col. 614-615.

provided another series of rhetorical performances on the part of Sir Howard Vincent, Major Seeley, Mr. McCrae, and Winston Churchill, which had little to do with strategic or political realities. Arnold-Forster defended his policy, adjuring his critics to look beyond the shores of the United Kingdom for Britain's future military role. But this did not persuade his listeners to abandon their cause: a motion reducing the Volunteer vote was brought forward, and was narrowly defeated, by a vote of 232 to 206.¹ Parliament was brought to a close two days later, and this brought an end to the Parliamentary debate under Balfour's Government. The obstructionists in both Houses had brought Arnold-Forster's army reforms to a stand-still.

Arnold-Forster's role had been made doubly difficult by the fact that Sir George Clarke, Secretary of the C.I.D., had submitted his own alternate scheme for the reorganization of the Auxiliary Forces to Balfour. Clarke favoured the Militia, and hoped to reform them into a national defence force 30,000 strong, which would free the Regular Army for overseas requirements. Arnold-Forster's main objection to this was that

we should at once be left without any regular force in the United Kingdom. I cannot believe the country would accept this ... I cannot consent to an army which I know would be unfit to face Regular Troops.²

Clarke also had suggestions regarding the Volunteers, and wrote to Balfour that

Already the Volunteers cost more than the maintenance in commission, interest on first cost, etc. of a squadron of ten first class battleships. The invasion cry is therefore

1. Hansard (Commons.) 13 July 1905. cols. 616-642.

2. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50338) ff. 114-115. See also (50301) "Secretary of State's reply to Alternative Proposals of Sir George Clarke." 20 June 1904. f. 257.

suicidal on the part of the Volunteers. Which course would an invading enemy prefer, that we should add 10 battleships to our present standard of strength, or that we should double the expenditure on the Volunteers?¹

But Clarke soon realized also that logic was not the dominant factor involved in reform of the Volunteers: the difficulty was not military but political. Clarke forwarded a proposal for reforming the force to Balfour with the words "The general disgruntlement of the Volunteers is a factor in the political situation which it is not wise to ignore, and there is no difficulty in removing it."² Clarke's solution was to reject Arnold-Forster's idea of training a small remnant of the Volunteers up to a professional standard, and to assign to them such tasks as remained in the domain of home defence, such as frustrating enemy raids, acting as the garrisons of defended ports, and as a potential reserve for the Regular Army. Clarke's proposals were eventually printed and distributed to the Cabinet,³ and he repeatedly urged on Balfour the necessity to channel the energies of the force into accepting a role as a defence against enemy raids.⁴ In contrast, by late 1905 Arnold-Forster had become increasingly skeptical whether they could be made to serve any military purpose whatsoever, observing

the Volunteers are an utterly undisciplined mob, run like other mobs, by Mob Law, and to attempt to make them understand the meaning of Military discipline, much more to enforce it, is practically hopeless. ⁵

By October he had relapsed into fatalism and told Sir John French

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1. Balfour MSS. (49700) Clarke to Balfour. 27 June 1904.
 2. Ibid. (49701) Clarke to Balfour. 5 June 1905.
 3. Cab 38/10/89. "Function and Organization of the Volunteers." 12 December 1905.
 4. Balfour MSS. (49702) Clarke to Balfour. 5 September 1905, f. 36; 17 September 1905, f. 42.
 5. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50350) 29 August 1905. f. 65.

... I was going to be beaten by the VOLUNTEERS, and that owing to their persistent opposition to any reform, I should have to leave them as incompetent, expensive, and useless as I found them.¹

The last month's of Balfour's administration thus drew to a close inconclusively.

The situation, however, was transformed by the General Election at the beginning of 1906, which brought in an overwhelming Liberal majority and revolutionised the atmosphere of the House of Commons. Although most of the vociferous leaders of the home defence lobby, such as Sir Howard Vincent and Major J.E.B. Seeley, were returned, they were now opposed by a huge host of Liberal M.P.s, who had campaigned on themes of reform and economy, if not outright "pacifism." An even greater contrast was provided by the new Secretary of State, Richard Burdon Haldane. Where Arnold-Forster had attempted to impose a preconceived programme of reform on the War Office, Haldane denied that he was a military expert, and was tactful and accommodating to his critics. Haldane, like Balfour, had a distinguished reputation in academic circles, especially in philosophy, and was renowned for his subtle mind. He was a natural successor to Balfour and the C.I.D., for his intellect resembled that of the late Prime Minister in many ways. Haldane's speech, introducing the Army Estimates on March 8, 1906, was a model of its kind. He had learned from Arnold-Forster's mistakes, noting that he had little military experience and that that was perhaps an advantage. There was nothing further from his mind "than putting forward pre-fabricated plans."² At the same time, Haldane gave proof of his ability

1. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50337) 16 October 1905.

2. Hansard. (Commons). 8 March 1906. cols. 655-656.

to learn from his predecessors and began by associating himself with the principles of Balfour's invasion speech, which was tactfully acknowledged were "the result of the clear thinking of gentlemen opposite." The apolitical nature and continuity of strategic principles in national defence were therefore confirmed. Haldane stressed that the C.I.D. decision on invasion would remain as the beginning reference point of his administration of the War Office.

... we are in earnest with this principle, and that is now a continuous principle. It is the principle of the late Government, it is the principle of the Defence Committee, it is the principle of the Navy, it is the principle of the War Office, and the Army Council; it is the principle of the present Government just as it was the principle of the late Government. We have bed-rock fact here for the organization of our defence.¹

He went on to reveal that certain decisions had already been made in accordance with this policy. The "forts" surrounding London were declared redundant, and were now "going to disappear root and branch", along with the War Office practice of making an annual reconnaissance of the United Kingdom to locate defence positions against invasion.² The C.I.D. officially abolished the Defences of London the next day for reasons of economy.³ This represented the end of a long battle carried on by Arnold-Forster against his military advisers. General Neville Lyttleton, Chief of the General Staff, in particular had put up a vigorous fight for the retention of the Defences of London, and wished to preserve the scheme in its totality, with its expensive complement of 175,000 Volunteers, trenches, and "forts".

His argument was that the public might not accept the Admiralty's argument

1. Hansard. (Commons) 8 March 1906. cols. 665.

2. Ibid. cols. 666-668.

3. Cab 38/11/11. "Minutes of 85th Meeting, C.I.D." 9 March 1906.

of sea-power as readily as had responsible leaders and advisors, and regarded the Defence as a form of insurance.

though not essential from the military point of view, the knowledge that they are maintained and that some troops are available to hold them will help to produce a desirable sense of security in the metropolis and allay the feeling of alarm which might arise in wartime among an ignorant populace if it were known that these positions had definitely been eliminated from our scheme of defence.¹

Arnold-Forster had not temporized, however, and had early set up "a Committee to enquire into the question of superfluous land and obsolete fortifications."² Haldane was merely completing a policy begun by Arnold-Forster. Haldane's speech was well received generally, although the debate which followed made it plain that the election had not completely eliminated the protagonists of home defence. Major Seeley continued to extol the Volunteers as a security against invasion, and Colonel Sandys asked for a large military force,³ ready to deal with a surprise attack on four days' notice.

The outstanding example of the continuity between the two Governments regarding questions of national defence is provided by the C.I.D. investigation of the problem of raids, which was in progress as the Liberals came into office. After producing his Invasion memorandum, Balfour had asked the military and naval experts on the C.I.D. to consider which places on the East coast would provide the best landing place for a raid, as well as possible means of defence against it. The assumption was to be that a war

1. Cab 3/1/22A. "The Strength of the Regular Army and Auxiliary Forces, Having regard to Peace and War Requirements." N.G. Lyttleton, 1 May 1904, p.2.

2. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50339) Diary, 4 July 1904, f. 116.

3. Hansard (Commons) 15 March 1906. cols. 1490-1491.

was in progress against Russia and Germany combined, and that Germany would launch a raid directed against the East coast.¹ The War Office carried out an elaborate reconnaissance project which included

reports on tides, prevalent winds, state of sea under varying conditions of wind, depths of water, harbours, channels of approach, anchorages, protection to shipping at anchor provided by sandbanks and islands, landing places, nature of beach, mechanical contrivances, positions for delaying a landing or for preventing a march inland, as of those suitable for immediate occupation by the landing force, roads, etc.²

Balfour continued during 1904 to press for a defence scheme against raids, saying

if raids will be attempted they will only be attempted with picked troops; their landing places cannot be foreseen; and we ought to have ready to meet them, whenever they appear, a body of troops which need not indeed be so highly trained, but which must be adequately equipped, organized, mobile within certain defined areas, with a competent staff, and a great superiority of numbers.

But he warned that neither patriotism or money could quickly improvise artillery or trained staff officers. All these would have to be provided for beforehand.³ Lieutenant-General Lyttleton agreed that the maximum attack that could be expected was two raids of 5000 men each, but paradoxically held out for a huge establishment for home defence, which included two divisions of Regulars and five divisions of Auxiliaries, a field force totalling 291,000 troops, excluding Ireland.⁴ Simultaneously the Army Council put pressure on Arnold-Forster to retain two divisions in Britain at all times, even in the midst of a great war.⁵ As an indication of the

1. Cab 2/1. "Minutes of 27th Meeting. C.I.D." 12 December 1903.

2. Cab. 3/1/23A. "Reconnaissance of the United Kingdom.." 9 May 1904, p.7.

3. Cab 38/5/65. "Note on Army reform and the military needs of the Empire." A.J.B. 27 June 1904. p. 2.

4. Cab 3/1/22A. p. 8.

5. Roberts MSS. Case X20931. A2/2. R4/41. Arnold-Forster to Roberts. 4 July 1904. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50339) Diary, 7 July 1904.

intermixture of strategy and politics involved in home defence, Balfour agreed that such a policy was desirable until the Auxiliary troops were effectively organized as a mobile force, "both to protect us from such invasion as is possible and to give confidence to those by whom invasion is feared. It must save us from panic, as well as from attack."¹

The Admiralty also studied the raid contingency. On March 1, 1905, Charles L. Ottley, Director of Naval Intelligence, wrote a scenario based on Balfour's earlier German raid hypothesis for Admiral Fisher, the First Sea Lord. In setting the scene, Ottley conceded the entire case of the "scaremongers".

Let the bolt fall from the Blue. Profound peace broods over Europe. The date is August of next year. The Mediterranean and Atlantic fleets are inside the Gut, the Channel Fleet is at sea off Queenstown. In the Home ports the vessels lie in their usual positions, with Nucleus Crews on board, fires laid, but water cold in the boilers. To judge from appearances, our preparations at Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham differ in no material respect from what has been obtained during the last twenty years. A deceptive calm broods over the dockyards ... Parliament is up; the Cabinet is dispersed over the length and breadth of these islands.²

At this juncture, Germany decides to force war by means of a raid of 10,000 men, who are loaded on liners at Emden. Ottley's chronicle of a hypothetical attack was written to emphasize the role of Fisher's naval reforms, especially the institution of nucleus crews, in providing a form of rapid and effective naval mobilization which would enable the defending force to be at the scene of an enemy landing within a few hours. Ottley described

1. Cab 38/5/65. p. 2.

2. Balfour MSS. (49710) "Suddenness in Naval Operations." by C.L. Ottley, D.N.I. 1 March 1905. ff. 199-201.

how retribution would fall upon a possible German raiding force in the process of disembarkation.

... before the keel of the first troop boat touches the shore, the smoke of a great fleet is sighted to the Eastward, by the look-outs of the covering German cruisers. As that ominous cloud rises against the sky, the German Admiral knows that the game is up. Woe betide him if he waits. Imagination catches a glimpse of the ensuing scene: - men, horses, guns, stores are bundled back pell-mell upon troop decks too soon to be converted (on pain of instant surrender) into the most pitiable of shambles. A falling tide catches half-a-dozen "frames" with their human freight as securely as a thrush is caught in bird-line. The fact that it requires a gift of imagination, with which Englishmen providentially are not often blessed, to realize all that the new "reorganization of the fleet" in very truth implies... The terrific engine of our sea-power, if informed with zeal and modern intelligence in the employment of instant initiative, will interpose between this country and the old spectre of invasion, a shield of perfect efficacy'

This document was not circulated in the C.I.D., but instead was sent by Fisher directly to the Prime Minister. Considerations such as these led Fisher to declare at the C.I.D. meeting that same day that the estimate of the maximum possible raiding force might be reduced from 5000 to "5, or to nothing at all." He asked why 370,000 men were maintained in the United Kingdom to prevent invasion, in spite of the power of the Fleet.²

Fisher's questions brought about a renewal of activity in the C.I.D. on the problem of a raid. Sir George Clarke sent Balfour a copy of the report of the 1900 Joint Conference which had instituted the 5000 man standard, and observed that the General Staff recommended a force of 321,000 Regulars to meet this threat, noting that "Logic is not a strong point at the War Office."³ Clarke had other contentions with the War Office: the

1. Balfour MSS. (49710) ff. 203-204.

2. Arnold Forster MSS. (50345). Diary, 1 March 1905.

3. Balfour MSS. (49701) Clarke to Balfour, 2 March 1905, f. 82.

Generals were continually citing Maurice's 1883 work, Hostilities without Declaration of War as an argument for a surprise attack and as a justification for a large home establishment. Clarke complained to Balfour that this created an absolutely false impression. It is quite true that Wars frequently begin without formal declaration... It is, however, wildly untrue to say that wars break out without the warning which a strain of relations provides for all intelligent people.¹

In March 1905 the C.I.D. studied two separate raid contingencies: a French raid on Portsmouth and a German descent on Newcastle and the Tyne shipyards. Clarke could not see "the ghost of a chance for the raiders" in the Portsmouth raid, but two days later sent Balfour an outline of the German raid on the Tyne, which he believed also "should have no chance of success. If the defenders are approximately equal to Boers in intelligence, the raiders would quickly be brought to a check and held till they could be overpowered."² But Clarke observed that while a German raid was a remote contingency strategically, it had a certain value politically.

The raid theory, in which I confess I do not believe, may be useful to serve as a peg on which to hang a justification of an intelligible organization for the Volunteers. The points, the temporary occupation of which would be worth the expenditure of 10,000 men, are few in number. The landing places sufficiently near these points for the purpose can be defined. The Volunteer problem thus reduces itself to simple terms. We require a certain number of Volunteers in a given area capable of being assembled at given points in a given time. We do not require them to be organized or trained in large bodies; but in small handy columns. Their drill need be sufficient only to enable them to be so handled. That they should be fairly good shots is all-important. They should have local knowledge and local guides who know the limited areas in question ... If once or twice a year we assembled them for a day's tactical training on the area which it was theirs to defend, it would suffice ... On these lines, it is easy to make an organization for the

1. Balfour MSS. (49701). 23 March 1905. f. 103.

2. Ibid. 25 March 1905. f. 109.

Volunteers, which they would like, as it would confer a sense of reality upon the force. At the same time, it would save a considerable sum now wasted.¹

Clarke enclosed a scenario of a German raid upon the Tyne, which showed how the Volunteers might be so employed. He estimated that 10,000 of the enemy, could be landed in six hours. But in two hours, or four at the latest, the home defence forces could be formed up, which would consist of 6500 riflemen and 18 field guns, as well as a number of machine guns. This force could easily delay the raiders until Regular reinforcements arrived by train from York and Edinburgh, about 100 miles distant.² Balfour himself remained skeptical as to the likelihood of a raid and replied to Clarke

as to the dangers of small bands of desperadoes, such dangers may exist: but they are more for the Police to deal with than either the Army, the Navy, or the Auxiliary Forces.³

Clarke, however, continued to urge that organizing the Force against raids would end "their present disgruntled attitude."⁴

Meanwhile, during the summer of 1905, Balfour had been preparing an 18-page memorandum on 'raids', similar to that which he had delivered on the invasion problem two years before. Owing to various delays, however, this was printed by the C.I.D. just after Balfour's Government left office, in early December. Balfour upgraded the earlier estimates regarding the possible size of a raiding force, for 5000 were too few to effect any serious damage. The upper limit was 10,000, as a larger number would prove too difficult to disembark. Their objectives would be limited to those important enough to compensate by their destruction for the almost certain loss of the entire force. Barbaric attacks against undefended towns were

1. Balfour MSS. (49701), 25 March 1905, f. 109.

2. Ibid. "Raid on the Tyne." 25 March 1905. f. 111.

3. Ibid. Balfour to Clarke. 14 April 1905.

4. Ibid. Clarke to J. Sanders. 16 May 1905.

out of the question, for this would shock the civilized world and "would raise the indignation of the invaded population to white heat", in a situation in which severe reprisals would not be long distant. Objectives would therefore be limited to "destroying some centre of our naval or military strength, a great dockyard, or a great manufactory of war material." The popular picture that alien aggressors would "roam, for a brief space of time undefeated but impotent over an undefended countryside" was unrealistic, as this simply was not worth the cost and risks involved.¹

Instead, Balfour singled out the most likely objectives.

Portsmouth, Devonport, Chatham, Newcastle, Barrow and Pembroke answer to this description, and of these we select Portsmouth and Newcastle for particular examination, partly because they are the dockyards an enemy would wish to destroy still more they are the dockyards which he could most easily reach."

Balfour believed the opposite to the popular idea of a raid: it would not come unheralded, to signal the opening of hostilities, but instead would come in the later stages of a conflict, when the Regular Army would be despatched overseas. The most important distinction between invasion and raid was that the defence against the latter was predominantly military, as it was conceded that the Germans could land without interruption from the sea. In both cases studied by the C.I.D. - the French raid on Portsmouth and the German raid on the Tyne - it seemed unlikely, however, that the enemy's crossing of the Channel would escape notice or that their landing would be uninterrupted by British destroyers or submarines. By the time the French or Germans could form up for their march inland, they would be opposed by large numbers of Regular or Auxiliary troops in the immediate area, who

1. Cab 3/1/34A. "Possibility of a Raid by a hostile force on the British coast. Memo by the late Prime Minister." 12 December 1905. p. 2.

2. Ibid. p. 3.

could easily delay the enemy's advance until reinforcements could be brought in by rail. Balfour therefore concluded that

So far as numbers and distance are concerned, the available British Troops, regular and auxiliary, ought to be sufficient to overwhelm a fully-equipped raiding force of 10,000 men before they could effect the object of their expedition. It is not so certain that the existing organization, perhaps not even the existing training, of these forces, is of the kind which would best enable them to use their superior numbers effectively, and above all, quickly. And if the raiders really thought it worth while to sacrifice 10,000 men to destroy Elswick, we are not convinced that in existing circumstances an expedition, unhampered by guns and horses, would find the task impossible.¹

One of the most interesting developments in Balfour's paper on raids is that it shifted the emphasis from naval to military defence, which was probably the result of Clarke's influence. Clarke had written to Balfour regarding the "10,000 buccaneers" that would be involved in a raid on the Tyne, that "I imagine that 2500 men with magazine rifles and possessing the military instincts of Boers would bring 10,000 invaders to a full stop without much difficulty, and the main thing would be to gain time." On the basis of the Clacton Manoeuvres, Clarke calculated that a force of 10,000 with a few guns and horses, would require 10 hours to unload, which would give the defenders ample time to assemble.²

In commenting upon the proof of Balfour's paper on raids for the C.I.D., Clarke referred to the various invasion conjectures which had appeared in the German press.

Young officers of the German General Staff may cherish this idea, and find encouragement in the fact that their lucubrations are advertised here and are treated seriously by journalists equally ignorant. As we are regarded as liable to panic views on this

1. Cab 3/1/34A. 12 December 1905. p.13.

2. Balfour MSS. (49702) Clarke to Balfour. 1 December 1905. ff. 173-176.

subject, and as it must be the ardent desire of our possible enemies to divert our expenditure from naval into military channels, there is a motive on the part of the foreign military publicists ... We have, however, to consider the teaching among the masses who neither reason nor read history, and such a paper as yours is exactly calculated to allay misgivings ...¹

Clarke was mistaken in his apparent assumption that the paper would be published and become public knowledge, but his argument shows his concern for the political aspect of the invasion issue, and the need to consider the mass of public opinion in dealing with the issue of invasion and raids. He was also a bridge between the two Administrations, for he quickly drew Haldane's attention to Balfour's paper, for he thought "it will help materially to fix his views on military policy."² Clarke apparently was successful, for the War Office under Haldane very quickly carried Balfour's raid policy into effect. During January 1906 the Army Council ordered all Home Commands to organize mobile forces as a defence against raids.³ Under the new distribution scheme, the General Staff believed that mobilization of the home army would frustrate any attempt on strategic objectives. Strong defences at naval bases and arsenals would provide additional deterrents.

Nevertheless, the General Staff raised the possibility that the enemy might land a force in the proximity of London to prevent or delay the sending of the Expeditionary Force, and to keep the Fleet in home waters, when both of these might be required for strategic purposes elsewhere during the precautionary period. They also felt that the enemy might achieve his objective with far fewer than 10,000 men, and that only three to five thousand, well-handled, would suffice for the destruction of the Elswick Works, if the attack could be delivered before the reinforcements

1. Balfour MSS. (49702) Clarke to Balfour. 16 December 1905. ff. 194-195.

2. *Ibid.* 24 January 1906. f. 203.

3. WO 32/273. "Memoranda on the numbers, composition, and distribution of the Mobile Forces required for the defence of the United Kingdom against Raids." 9 January 1906.

of Regulars arrived or the nearby Volunteers were "collected in any condition of organization to offer battle." The General Staff, however, did not restrict the possible objectives of raiders to strategic points, and added that raids could also be mounted to disrupt communications, or as feints which might disguise a real attack in another direction, and would draw off troops or ships from more important sectors. They called attention to the scattered Headquarters and organization of the Auxiliary formations, and stressed the importance of the Government providing an early warning by means of a precautionary telegram, which would enable the military authorities to make potential objectives secure against attack.¹

Further improvements were made to the home defence mobilization system during 1906 by Major-General (later Field-Marshal) Douglas Haig, Director of Military Operations, based on the C.I.D. estimates of the size and objectives of a possible raiding force. Haig's principle was borrowed straight from Balfour's paper: "to oppose a landing with such force as can be quickly rendered available and to strengthen the initial opposition by continuous reinforcements." Portions of the coast-line within 30 miles of possible enemy objectives were to be watched with special vigilance, and the existing home defence forces were divided into sedentary garrisons, mobile reserve forces, and mobile columns to oppose raids. The mobile columns were to be made up of Volunteers and Yeomanry living in coastal districts, and would be organized into brigades assigned to certain sectors of the coast.²

1. Cab 3/1/36A. "Possibility of a Raid by a Hostile force on the British Coast: Remarks by the General Staff." N.G. Lyttleton, 23 March 1906.

2. Sydenham MSS. (50836) "Data for the framing of a Mobilization Scheme for Home Defence Against Raids." 20 July 1906.

Haldane very early turned his talents to the resolution of the Auxiliary Forces problem, and in May appointed a Committee to supervise the reorganization of the Militia, Volunteers, and Yeomanry into a single force, on a decentralized basis, as had been hinted in his opening speech on the Army Estimates.¹ The Committee first met on May 22 under the chairmanship of Lord Esher, and its unwieldy and heterogeneous membership of 45 included Sir Howard Vincent, Major Seeley, Lord Lovat, St. Loe Strachey, and Lord Roberts. It issued no minutes or Report, and dispersed in July without reaching any decision on the Auxiliary Forces. Esher wrote to Haldane that it was made up of those who were, in the majority,

by political conviction, birth, station, and education ... opposed to the Government now in office ... A grave political danger has hitherto been the 'trades unionism' of the Volunteer Forces, voiced in Parliament by a few Volunteer spokesmen, informally accepted as representing that force which controls a large number of votes. The breaking up of that force into groups constituted in County Areas, with conflicting interests and competing aims is bound to produce a beneficial effect, and to free the Minister of the day from an influence which hitherto has proved pernicious and not in the true interests of military efficiency.²

As if to provide substance for Esher's arguments, Lord Wemyss initiated another debate on behalf of the Militia in the House of Lords on May 14th, explaining that his soul had been in travail over the state of home defence for the past fifty years, and the situation now seemed as bad as ever. Statements by Government spokesmen failed to quiet Wemyss' fears, although it was emphasised that only raids were believed possible and that the Government was preparing against this contingency. Some hints were

1. Hansard (Commons). 8 March 1906. cols. 677-678.

2. Esher. Journals and Letters. Vol. II. pp. 164-165.

3. Hansard. (Lords) 14 May 1906. cols. 99-101.

dropped regarding the new policy.

... we are considering the matter very fully - a scheme worked out for utilizing the Volunteers for coast defence against raids, not in a vague, indefinite and general way, but in accordance with a plan by which the coast within a certain distance (of certain objectives) of which Portsmouth and the Tyne are typical, and of which others exist, such as Barrow, Liverpool, and Pembroke Dock, and where an enemy in possession for a few hours could strike at the fighting efficiency of the nation, could be protected by the Volunteers.¹

Lord Newton attacked the defence lobbyists, singling out the "unsound views" of those who had sat on Haldane's Committee on the Auxiliary Forces.

Howard Vincent's weakness is that he thinks the country, and the whole British Empire so far as that goes, exists for the benefit of the Volunteers, and more especially for that particular battalion he used to command... but there is one person upon it who is more dangerous and pernicious than anybody else living in this country, and that is the editor of the Spectator, Mr. Strachey, who is responsible for the preposterous and absurd doctrine that all we require in this country is a large number of persons with broad-brimmed hats, with rifles hanging on pegs, which rifles they are going to take down at the necessary moment and shoot the invaders, and then return to their ordinary vocations.²

But protests against the lobbyists were rare, and further attacks upon the Government were delivered by Lord Roberts on July 10th, and the Militia lobbyists on July 24th.³

Haldane's complete policy gradually emerged. In a paper prepared for the C.I.D. in June, 1906 he recognized the existing chaos in home defence.

Under present circumstances there is no recognized organisation for war of the Military Forces in the United Kingdom. These forces have grown up on no fixed principle. There are many units which cost large sums and yet cannot be mobilised. There are other elements

1. Hansard (Lords) 14 May 1906. col. 115.

2. Ibid. cols. 117-118.

3. Ibid. 10 July 1906. cols. 656-663. J.K. Dunlop. Op.Cit. p 259.

essential for mobilization which are non-existent... it is not clear that some of our forces exist for any useful military purpose. The old home defence role of the Militia was first superseded owing to the growth of the Volunteer Force, and has since been reduced to still further insignificance by the increased defensive power of the Navy.¹

Experience had demonstrated the difficulty of dealing with voluntary citizen forces through a central military administration: the proposal was to hand over the home defence forces to County Associations, which would be given an annual grant to furnish facilities for training local forces.

Besides managing the affairs of the local territorial forces, the Associations should serve a most useful purpose in fostering rifle clubs, cadet corps, and other semi-military bodies, which would be affiliated to the local forces.²

Despite criticisms on points of detail by War Office officials,³ the C.I.D. resolved to go forward with Haldane's proposed re-organization. In a speech at Newcastle on September 15, Haldane exalted the concept of "a nation in arms" as the only safe-guard against aggression, and outlined the concept of a unified Auxiliary Force which would guarantee the safety of the home island against raids, and serve in general as a second line to the Regular Army as a base for expansion in time of national emergency.⁴

Throughout 1906 General Douglas Haig, the Director of Military Operations, worked out the details of recasting the Auxiliary Forces into the Territorial Force, working through a War Office committee.⁵ By 1907 the day of reckoning for the Auxiliary Forces had arrived. The King's Speech, which opened Parliament referred to the new proposals to re-define

1. Cab 3/1/38A. "Notes on the Organization and Administration of the Military Forces in the United Kingdom." by R.B. Haldane. 18 June 1906, p.1.

2. Ibid. p. 2.

3. Cab 3/1/39A. "... Remarks on paper 38A" by Sir John French. W.O. 27 June 1906. Cab 2/2/1 "Minutes of 89th Meeting, C.I.D." 28 June 1906. "Minutes of 90th Meeting, C.I.D." 6 July 1906.

4. "Mr. Haldane and the Army." Times. 15 September 1906. p. 6.

5. Duff Cooper. Haig. Vol. 1. pp. 108-114.

the function of the auxiliary forces,¹ and on March 4, Haldane introduced the Territorial and Reserve Forces Bill, which proposed the abolition of the existing Militia, Yeomanry, and Volunteers, and to establish in their place a 14 division citizen force, whose first function would be as a home defence force, and whose size would be limited to 300,000.² The introduction of the Bill brought an effective end to the discussion of invasion in Parliament, for the Government was providing a home defence army against invasion, as well as a Fleet. Because both the Government and the home defence lobby were agreed upon the role of both services in home defence, invasion virtually disappeared as an issue in Parliamentary debate after the introduction of the Bill. The controversy now centred on whether or not the proposed Territorial Force would provide a better defence against overseas attack than the existing ^{formations,} ~~functions.~~ The home defence lobby by this time was dispirited, demoralized and divided. Haldane was further aided by the huge Liberal majority, which disposed of the various clauses of the Bill one after another. The final division took place on June 19, 286 to 63, and it became law.³ The King himself gave the new Territorial Force strong support by summoning the Lord Lieutenants of the Counties, the local authorities responsible for the Force, to Buckingham Palace in October, and the new Force grew rapidly, attaining a strength of 207,000 by the end of 1908.⁴

Only one direct assault was made in Parliament upon the Government's home defence policy in 1907. While the bulk of the Fleet was away on

1. Hansard (Commons). 12 February 1907, col. 3.

2. Ibid. 4 March 1907. cols. 503, 507-508, 512.

3. J.K. Dunlop. Op. Cit. pp. 282-285.

4. Ibid. p. 286.

manoeuvres at Lagos, Lord Lovat asked whether or not conditions were conducive for a surprise landing by the Germans, using a fleet of liners to bring over 150,000 men. Lord Tweedmouth, the First Lord, stated that enough ships remained in home waters to frustrate any project of this kind.¹ More significantly, Lord Roberts followed with a speech on British lack of military preparedness which recorded his own re-conversion to the idea of invasion.

I myself doubted at one time the feasibility of any large force being landed on our shores, but modern conditions have developed so rapidly that it is impossible now to study the question without realizing that, under some such circumstances as the noble Lord has supposed, a large number of troops could be safely and rapidly landed in this country.

Lord Roberts pointed out that the bulk of the Regular Army was stationed in and around London, while the Volunteers were most numerous in the North: could not an enemy land on the East coast and thereby divide the home defence forces? He pointed to the growing power of a nearby nation with five million soldiers, whose Navy was approaching that of Great Britain in strength.²

The apparently trivial incident was full of ramifications for the future. The C.I.D's policy on invasion had been accepted by successive Conservative and Liberal Cabinets, had been imposed on a protesting War Office, and sanctified by the passage of law in the House of Commons. But the battle of public opinion still remained unresolved, and irreconcilable, such as Lord Lovat and Lord Roberts still remained. The struggle between analysis and intuition continued, and in the background, the growing naval power of imperial Germany seemed to lend substance to fears of invasion.

1. Hansard. (Lords). 18 February 1907. cols. 501-503, 515-518.

2. Ibid. cols. 507-508.

CHAPTER VI: THE GERMAN INVASION MENACE AND
THE SECOND INVASION INQUIRY, 1907 - 1908.

The national defence policy had prevailed over the prejudices of the War Office, and the Parliamentary opposition of the home defence lobby. Now it was to be challenged a third time in the arena of public opinion. The major factor behind the new agitation was the menacing position and increased naval power of Germany. A month before Balfour had delivered his decisive announcement of Government policy on invasion, the Kaiser had precipitated a diplomatic crisis with France in Morocco. In the atmosphere of anti-German feeling which followed, the "invasionists" were free to argue that the Government had not considered the possibility of invasion from Germany, which had now emerged as Britain's most likely future enemy, with the first army in Europe, a navy growing steadily stronger, and an increasingly-powerful industrial capacity.

In actual fact, warnings of German invasion had already been made in official circles, as we have seen, and the C.I.D. had begun to consider the possibility of overseas attack from Germany, although this could not be announced publicly. In February 1904 the C.I.D. had printed Robertson's paper on "The Military Resources of Germany, and Probable Method of their Equipment in a War Between Germany and England", which transposed his earlier suspicion of France to Germany. Robertson pointed to the great expansion of the German merchant marine, already second in the world, and believed that Britain might suffer local reverses at the outset of an Anglo-German War. These conditions might induce Germany

to throw 150,000 to 300,000 troops into England in an effort to strike a decisive blow before the Navy and Empire could marshal their full strength. Although the difficulties of the operation were tremendous, they could be largely overcome by the careful forethought and planning which was the hallmark of German staff work.

... the invading force, once landed, could live upon the country, and maintain itself unsupported for several weeks. In the meantime it would be hoped that the moral effect produced on the densely-crowded and wealthy population of England, and the shock given to British credit, might lead, if not to complete submission, at least to a Treaty by which England would become a German Satellite.¹

Robertson described Germany's extensive harbour facilities and quoted German military authorities, such as von Moltke, Baron von Luttwitz, von Edelsheim, and von der Goltz, who had speculated over the possibility of invading England. He believed that

it is impossible to resist the conclusion that the invasion of England will be given a prominent place in the German plan of campaign; it will undoubtedly be attempted if the slightest opportunity presents itself. It is the only alternative to a purely naval struggle ... only by invasion could she assume the offensive - a role entirely in consonance with her military tradition and policy, and with the expressed opinion of leaders of military thought in the German Empire. Finally, having regard to the perfect organization of the General Staff in Germany, and to its established practice of framing plans for all possible contingencies, we may rest assured that if invasion be attempted at all, the attempt will be made in the very earliest stage of the war.²

But this opinion was not unanimous, even in Military Intelligence.

Colonel E.A. Altham had written a critique of Robertson's paper which maintained that the strength of the Regular and Auxiliary troops in

1. Cab 3/1/20A. I. "The Military Resources of Germany and Probable Method of their Employment in a War between Germany and England."

23 February 1904, p.5.

2. Ibid. p. 6.

Britain was sufficient "to meet any German force which in a few hours could be hurried across the North Sea and landed practically without supplies and without land transport on our coast." But landing, Altham indicated, was the least part of the invader's task. A sufficiently powerful expedition would require large numbers of horses, guns, and ammunition wagons which could only be brought in through the capture of a port, an operation in which the German General Staff had no experience. Unless Germany intervened in a war in which Russia and France were already fighting Britain, the project was impossible.¹ Later the C.I.D. considered the more modest possibility of a German raid on the Tyneside shipyards.²

Official considerations of German Invasion were paralleled by the conjectures of novelists and journalists in the years immediately following the Boer War. One of the first prophesies of a German attack was Erskine Childers' The Riddle of the Sands, published in 1903. This was a skilfully-written mystery, based on a German plot to tow troops to England in coal barges from seven small harbours. Childers lamented that England had neither a fleet, a naval base, nor a policy in the North Sea, and predicted that the Germans would probably land on the open beach somewhere in the Wash. Selborne, the First Lord of the Admiralty, sent a copy of the book to Battenberg, the D.N.I., who acknowledged that

As a novel, it is excellent, as a war plan it is rubbish. It suggests a scheme of invasion, to be put into execution the instant war breaks out, and without reference to the Royal Navy. Apart from the unsoundness of the principle, the details are absurd. At any rate, if Germany wished to

1. Cab 3/1/20A. I. pp. 8-9.

2. See Chapter Five.

invade us, there are other and simpler methods than those suggested, of embarking the military forces and transporting them - or rather, attempting to. The Hydrographer concurs with me.¹

The invasion-minded Spectator, however, gave the book a splendid reception, lauding it as a

romance with a solid groundwork of facts, and it is a book with a purpose ... it bears on the face of it such a stamp of extreme probability that we are almost persuaded by Mr. Childer's cunning to take it seriously ... as a sensational novel the story stands in most favourable contrast to the wildly improbable tales which so often pass under this category.²

The work quickly established popularity with this public, and eventually ran through four editions and a French translation.

The publication of an invasion novel in Germany in 1904 seemed to provide a further proof as to the trend of German opinion, and the work was quickly translated into English as The Coming Conquest of England. The book featured a Franco-Russo-German coalition against England, in which a large French Army and the Russian Imperial Guard land at Hastings, while a German army lands in Scotland. The story ended with the Kaiser making a victorious entry into London to dictate terms of peace.³ The book was quoted in the House of Lords as evidence of German intentions.⁴ It was joined by an English effort entitled The Meteor Flag of England, which prophesied the horrors of German invasion. The Germans obliterate a village for harbouring British partisans, the French sack London for 48 hours, and the Russians loot Aberdeen, which sees "innocent babies wantonly bayon-
etted and tossed into the flames." Elsewhere wounded British defenders

1. Mark Kerr. Prince Louis of Battenberg. Longmans, London, 1934. p. 176.

2. Spectator. 1 August 1903. pp. 174-75.

3. August Niemann. The Coming Conquest of England. Routledge & Sons, London, 1904.

4. Hansard. (Lords) 10 July 1905. cols. 4-12.

are thrown into burning houses. The author proclaimed that invasion would come unless "a standing army of defence" was created, and called for a nation-wide network of rifle clubs.¹ The Decline and Fall of the British Empire, published by the National Service League as propaganda for conscription for home defence, presented a similar view of the future. It was even more blatant in tone, describing the peril "encircling an Isle of trembling nerve-ridden townsmen, who had forgotten to play the man for their hearths and homes." This was a national morality drama, which dramatized the future consequences of military improvidence:

the shameful story ... of the Isle denuded of troops, of the cornships that never came; of the fleet that grew weary of watching, of the dark night, and the crowded transports; of streets that lay sodden with the blood of those who ran because they never learned to shoot; of the women who cursed them for cowards when the foreigner was quartered in their homes.²

The Black Fortnight, or the Invasion of 1915, was yet another effort which described the effects of a Russian landing in Scotland and a French descent on Wales.³

But the German invasion story was really established as a fictional genre with the Daily Mail's publication of William Le Queux's The Invasion of 1910, as a serial from March 19 to July 4, 1906. Conceived during the Moroccan crisis of mid-1905, this was the most carefully planned of all the invasion stories. Le Queux had written to Lord Roberts, asking him to criticize his "outline scheme of the enemy's operations."⁴ Lord Roberts, now retired from active service, and leading

1. Gordon Stables. The Meteor Flag of England. James Nisbet, London, 1905.

2. E.E. Mills, ed. The Decline and Fall of the British Empire. National Service League, London, 1905, p. 44.

3. George Rome Hall, M.D. The Black Fortnight; or the Invasion of 1915. Sonnensheim, London, 1904.

4. Roberts MSS. Case X20926. Box M.4. R 47/41 Le Queux to Roberts, 28 July 1905; see also R 47/48 Le Queux to Roberts, 27 January 1906. (contd. next page)

the conscription campaign of the National Service League, evidently recognized Le Queux as an ally, and helped to sketch out the general strategic idea of the imaginary campaign. However, the interests of strategy did not always coincide with publicity, and Northcliffe, proprietor of the Daily Mail, over-ruled Lord Roberts, directing Le Queux to re-route the fictional German invaders through every large city in the Kingdom, instead of "remote one-eyed country villages where there was no possibility of large Daily Mail sales."¹ Northcliffe was more concerned over profits than strategical accuracy, therefore "the invasion plan was altered to allow ferocious Uhlans to gallop into every town from Sheffield to Chelmsford."²

Northcliffe did all he could to publicise the story. Editorials and leading articles in the Daily Mail pointed out that the Government had studied only a French, not a German, invasion, and quoted disquieting statistics about recent Japanese overseas landings. Haldane was called upon to provide a trained reserve of 500,000 men to serve as an invasion deterrent.³ Le Queux wrote an article which revealed Lord Robert's share in the story, and hinted that the story was based upon confidential information and the advice of unidentified official experts.

... we assert that England has already been well reconnoitred by foreign intelligence officers, foreign maps are even better than our own, and our neighbours across

4. (contd. from previous p.) Daily Mail. 19 March 1906, p.7. to 4 July 1906. passim.

1. Bernard Falk. Bouquets for Fleet Street. Hutchinson, London, 1951, p. 65. see also Norman Sladen; The Real Le Queux. Weidenfelt & Nicholson, London, 1938, p. 191.

2. I.F. Clarke. Voices Prophesying War. O.U.P., 1966. p. 145.

3. Daily Mail. 10 March 1906. p. 4.

the North Sea and the Channel know even more of the topographical nature of our country, its military possibilities, and its resources than we generally know themselves.¹

Northcliffe published in the Mail, and in other London and provincial papers, large maps illustrating the various Anglo-German battles on land and sea, as well as the path of advance of the German army in England. Various statements by Lord Roberts were prominently displayed and exploited. This attracted such wide attention that the Prime Minister was asked in the House of Commons whether

the Government can take any steps or express any opinion which will discourage the publication of matter of this sort, calculated to prejudice our relations with other Powers.

Campbell-Bannerman expressed dismay at this evidence of declining standards in British journalism, but was content to leave the matter to the good judgement of the public.² The Daily Mail seized upon this unsolicited publicity and published a letter from Le Queux to the Prime Minister which complained that he had deprecated a work he could not have read. Campbell-Bannerman's secretary replied that criticism had not been directed towards the book, but rather to "an objectionable form of advertisement, which Sir Henry considered was likely to produce irritation abroad and might conceivably alarm the more ignorant public at home."³

But the publicists were not chastened, and during the course of the serial Northcliffe dressed up sandwichmen in spiked helmets and

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1. "Can England be Invaded?" Daily Mail. 10 March 1906. p. 4.
 2. Hansard. (Commons) 13 March 1906. col. 1120.
 3. Daily Mail, 14 March 1906. p. 7; 16 March 1906. p. 7.

Prussian-blue uniforms, and sent them marching through the streets of London, to call attention to The Invasion of 1910.¹ Colonel Sir Howard Vincent protested in the House of Commons against the spectacle of men "parading the streets of the West End dressed in uniforms of the Imperial German Army, and bearing advertisements of a novel referring to the German nation ..." and demanded that the Uniform Act be applied against the perpetrators of this outrage, especially as German authorities would soon be visiting London. Arnold-Forster, for once in agreement with Vincent, called upon the Minister responsible to "use any powers he may possess to put an end to this exhibition."² The Daily Mail, in search of any gratuitous publicity, noted that even the music-halls had adopted the invasion theme.

At the Palace and the Canterbury references are made to it nightly, but the most amusing and the most popular is Mr. Will Evans' new sketch ... In this there is a dramatic attack by the Germans, with scenic effects, pom-poms, etc.³

Overseas reaction to the story was not neglected. The Mail "revealed" that Le queux had received letters from Germany advising him to take precautions for his personal safety, and never again to set foot on German soil. Attacks by "Anglo-phobe" newspapers in Austria and Germany upon the story, its author, and Lord Roberts, were fully reported.⁴ The story had a greater influence in Germany than was realized, for the Kaiser was so impressed with it that he personally ordered both the Naval and General Staffs to submit formal reports on each daily instalment as it appeared

1. Clarke.Op.Cit. p. 145.

2. Hansard. 14 May 1906. cols. 187-188.

3. Daily Mail. 13 April 1906. p. 2.

4. Ibid. 24 March 1906, p. 7, 15 March 1906, p.7; 16 March 1907, p.7; 19 March 1906, p. 7.

in the Daily Mail.¹

The Invasion of 1910 was an outstanding commercial success, not because of any intrinsic literary merit, but because of its ingenious, if unscrupulous, promotion. It was re-published as a book which went through five editions in English, and in all its 27 translations sold over a million copies.² The plot itself was only a more elaborate and voluminous version of the German invasion story which had begun to appear after the Boer War. It began with a "bolt from the blue" in which Germany destroys the Royal Navy by a surprise torpedo attack, while German aliens resident in England sabotage British communications. For heightened realism, the book reproduced facsimiles of posters signed by the Kaiser, proclaiming martial law in districts conquered by the German army, and ordering German residents in England to report for military duty. Le Queux's theme was that only Lord Roberts' program for conscription would prevent such a disaster from occurring, and he underscored his point by grisly descriptions of the horrors of invasion. Villages sheltering sharpshooters are burned to the ground, captured British officers are deported to Germany, women and girls are shot down indiscriminately, and the entire town of Feltham, Middlesex, including children, is put to the sword. The British defenders also indulge in such atrocities, assassinating enemy sentries by night and lynching prisoners. In the great London uprising which ended the book, Le Queux had British mobs tearing Germans from limb to limb, stabbing and shooting every invader who falls into their hands,

1. Jonathan Steinberg. "The Copenhagen Complex." Journal of Contemporary History. Vol. I. No. 3 (1966) p. 40.

2. William Le Queux. Things I Know About Kings, Celebrities, and Crooks. Eveleigh Nash, London, 1923. p. 249.

while women, "with screams of fiendish delight", set fire to houses filled with sleeping Germans.

The story ended inconclusively, with the Kaiser and the surviving invaders languishing in British prison camps, and with Germany confirmed in her annexation of Holland and Denmark. Le Queux concluded that the nation's failure to accept universal military service, as well as neglect of the Fleet, had led to this strengthening of Germany at the expense of the British Empire. He inveighed against the miscalculations of "the cowardly Blue Water School", the inefficiency of the War Office, the socialism and hysteria of the city mobs, and the effete and invertebrate Government.

Both Government and people he compared unfavourably with their predecessors of the Napoleonic Wars. But deliverance had come, in the predictable shape of Lord Roberts' rifle clubs, who eventually defeat the invaders. Each edition of the book contained a prefatory comment from Lord Roberts, which noted that

The catastrophe that may happen if we will remain in our present state of unpreparedness is vividly and forcibly illustrated in Mr. Le Queux's new book, which I recommend to the perusal of every one who has the welfare of the British Empire at heart.¹

The Daily Mail also quoted other military authorities, such as General Sir John French on the perils of invasion. French believed a landing by 50,000 would create a panic, and disturb trade and commerce, "but if the United Kingdom had a male population expert in the use of the rifle an enemy would not attempt such a raid."²

1. William Le Queux. The Invasion of 1910. Eveleigh Nash, London, 1906 preface.

2. "General French on Invasion." Daily Mail. 12 May 1906. p.7; see also 19 March 1906. p. 7.

The commercial success of Le Queux's Invasion of 1910 served to inspire other writers. Within six months of its appearance, imitations, such as The Enemy In Our Midst, The Defenceless Islands, The Writing on the Wall, The North Sea Bubble, and The Shock of Battle all described German aggression in England. The Defenceless Islands emphasized the economic consequences of invasion, describing

an ominous dim vision of an island whose defenceless people, crowded into devouring cities, and thinly scattered upon tracts of derelict land, a third of them ever on the edge of starvation, more than three-quarters of them never far from want, looking in deadly suspense, seaward: where, far out of sight, the Fleet alone stands between them and unimaginable ruin.¹

Walter Wood's The Enemy in Our Midst developed Le Queux's xenophobic theme of a military plot involving the "100,000 German residents in London."

Aliens meet at night, are secretly armed and drilled, and build up an immense armory of guns and ammunition. They eventually succeed in engineering an uprising in London.

Every registered alien was an authority on the topography and resources of the district in which he dwelt. If there was a cul de sac into which an enemy could be driven, or trapped and butchered, he knew of it; if there were mews or garages, he was acquainted with them and their accommodation for horses and vehicles; he knew the resources of every grocer's shop, every public-house, every dairy, every fruiterer's, every butcher's, and every telephone call office. The capacities of the railways were known to a truck; the tubes were understood throughout every yard of their length, and the possibilities for an appalling sacrifice of English people calculated and put down on paper.²

Wood, like Le Queux, emphasized the disorganization of the War Office and

1. L. Cope Cornford. The Defenceless Islands. Grant Richards, London, 1906. p. 20.

2. Walter Wood. The Enemy in Our Midst. John Long, London, 1906, p.39 ff.

the incompetence of the Volunteers, and in his story, a Lord Roberts-type figure saves the day by organizing war veterans into a National Guard. The book ends with the House of Lords unanimously assenting to the institution of conscription. The highly charged theme of German treachery and infiltration evidently appealed to the British public, for the novel went through three editions. The Writing on the Wall, published in June 1906, described the history of a German invasion in 1908, to call attention to the unpreparedness of the home army.¹ Patrick Vaux, a naval writer, published two stories in a year which featured German raids on British soil.²

Invasion stories soon became so commonplace that they attracted the attention of the satirists, and a parody novelette, The North Sea Bubble, mocked the solemn pretensions of the various home defence moralists. Strachey mounted a fierce attack in the Spectator: He charged that the "sensational fancies" and "lugubrious hallucinations" of certain invasion novels masked a crude conscription propaganda, which attacked the voluntary principle and undermined British patriotism. He declared that they were evidently written, not with a resolute intention to improve our national forces, but to complete their destruction by levelling extravagant accusations at their head, and deriding them for their efforts, and the country for its belief in their value. On the other hand, the most ruthless methods of blood and iron are held up to our admiration...³

But other writers justified the German invasion propaganda as producing

1. Times Literary Supplement. 29 June 1906. p. 236.

2. Patrick Vaux. The Shock of Battle. Putnam's, London, 1906. Times Literary Supplement. 5 October 1906. p. 339; P. Vaux and Lionel Vexley. When the Eagle Flies Seaward. Hurst & Blackett, London, 1907.

3. Ernest Oldmeadow. North Sea Bubble. Grant Richards, London, 1906. "The Invasion of England". Spectator. 29 September 1906. pp. 438-440.

1906 Le Queux was mocked in "The Paper Campaign of 1906." Punch. 28 March 1907. p. 221.

See also Ibid. 10 April 1907. p. 268.

a healthy interest on the part of the public in questions of national security,¹ and they were supplemented by a flood of articles and books which discussed the pros and cons of overseas attack.² Public agitation over invasion remained a source of concern to high Government officials. Sir George Clarke, Secretary of the C.I.D., commented in an official paper in 1907 that

Numerous writers in this country have been endeavouring for some time to create a German scare, and one alarming brochure of this nature received the imprimatur of Lord Roberts. It is clear that this propaganda has produced in this country a certain feeling of uneasiness and of suspicion of which it is necessary to take account.

He believed that the alarm might assume such an acute form that the Government would be forced to redistribute the fleet, concentrating the Atlantic Fleet in home waters, and adding the Home Fleet to the Channel Command.³

The flood of invasion stories continued throughout 1907. E. Phillips Oppenheim described a treacherous, but fictional, German Waiters' Union, which has succeeded in hiding 200,000 Mauser rifles in a Soho basement, and sponsors drilling and shooting weekends for its membership. The fictional Germans hope to lure the British Fleet into a minefield in Kiel harbour

1. "Captain, R.N." "England's Naval Supremacy: Is It Threatened?" United Service Magazine. August 1906. p. 469.

2. Lt. E. Ausley. "Military Cyclists for Home Defence." United Service Magazine. April 1907. pp. 64-68; Sir C.J. Calwell. The Tactics of Home Defence. London, 1908; Commander A.C. Crutchley, "Lest We Forget." Daily Mail. 21 October 1907, p. 4; Rt. Hon. C.W. Dilke. "Official Opinion on Defence." United Service Magazine, October 1907. pp. 31-33; John Leyland. "Invasion and Imperial Defence." Nineteenth Century. December 1907. pp. 935-948, Bart Kennedy. The German Danger. Collier, London, 1907; Sir R. Hennell. "Organization of Power Traction on Roads for Home Defence." R.U.S.I. Journal. April 1907. pp. 413-414; C.W. Radcliffe-Cooke. "The Invasion Scare. A New View." Nineteenth Century. March 1907. pp. 395-405; Major Charles Ross. The Problem of National Defence. Hutchinson, London, 1907, Commander Hon. H.M. Shore. "Home Defence." United Service Magazine. July 1907. pp. 373-384.

3. Sydenham MSS. (50836) No. 4. "Secret. Note on the Distribution of our Naval Forces. 1907." ff. 14-15.

on the pretence of joint manoeuvres, while the German fleet lies hidden nearby with 180,000 troops aboard for the conquest of Britain. The monstrous plot is thwarted just in time, and the attack is averted. The apparent moral was that German gestures of friendship were only a cover for perfidy and surprise attack. The novel was immensely popular, and sold five editions in the next decade.¹ An even more violent version of future attack was provided by A.J. Dawson's The Message, inspired by a letter from Wolseley castigating "the breed of cowards" who directed British affairs, and inciting the British people to "rend the jawers and talkers who prevent us from being prepared to meet invasion."² Dawson outlined an ignominious defeat brought about by excessive economy and blind faith in pacifism and progress. But afterwards Britain slowly and secretly rearms, inspired by sobriety, duty and a "New Puritanism." Eventually, a national uprising destroys the Prussian garrisons on British soil, and conscription becomes the law of the land. The Times Literary Supplement took exception to Dawson's denunciation of the Liberal Government, and observed that his "acquaintance with current politics does not seem to be profound."³ Other reviewers found the story extravagant and unrealistic, and protested against its "factional animosity." Dawson's violent tirade against the Liberals proved too much even for the National Service League. Strachey advised Lord Roberts privately that the work was partisan in nature, in contrast to the previously "moderate and

1. E.P. Oppenheim. The Secret. Ward, London, 1907.

2. A.J. Dawson. The Message. Grant Richards, London, 1907. p. 184.

3. Times Literary Supplement. 19 April 1907. p. 137.

uninflammatory" literature of the N.S.L.

I should like to add that though I am supposed to be one of the people specially alarmist in regard to German policy, I cannot help thinking that Mr. Dawson has made a very great mistake in attributing acts of special barbarity and cruelty to the German invading army. His suggestion of a Colchester massacre is, I think, one which Germans might very naturally resent as an outrage. I have myself never hesitated to speak out about German policy, but I think it most unwise to exaggerate in this way.¹

Lord Roberts agreed, and the N.S.L. stopped distributing the novel, although it continued to enjoy a wide circulation with the public and went through numerous editions.

As time passed the invasion stories became more sensational and implausible. Two further efforts of 1907, The Death Trap and The World Peril of 1910, described Continental coalitions against England resulting in invasion, and ended with homilies on the virtues of conscription. In the first, enemy victory was aided by the use of airships which destroy the British fleet; in the other, defeat is averted only by the landing of a Japanese expeditionary force on British soil. Their character was best described by the Times Literary Supplement: they were full of

... immense detail, lurid rhetoric, dithyrambs on the 'inherent rotten-ness' of Britain and the aggression of Germany, and much violent language about the Kaiser and English politicians of both parties.²

Because these stories appeared in such profusion and variety, as serials in magazines and newspapers designed for the mass market, as well as in repeated editions as books, we may infer that they had a great influence

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1. Roberts MSS. Case 20927. Box S.2 R85/26. Strachey to Roberts, 10 June 1907. See also: Strachey MSS. Roberts to Strachey 11 June 1907; Spectator 18 May 1907, p. 802. United Service Magazine. July 1907.p.347.
 2. Times Literary Supplement. 3 October 1907. p. 303; George Griffiths. The World Peril of 1910. White, London, 1907; Robert W. Cole. The Death Trap. Greening, London, 1907.

on public opinion. This is borne out by the contemporary comments of statesmen, who were certainly aware of the strength of public feeling on the question of a German invasion.

Had it not been for the heightened apprehension of the public over German invasion, the Government's national defence policy might ~~not~~ have gone unchallenged. But the rise of German naval power had produced a climate of public anxiety over the efficacy of Britain's national defences, which was cultivated by certain pressure groups on behalf of their own programmes for home defence. The most influential of these was the National Service League, which had been founded during the Boer War ^{to} promote the enactment of universal military service in home defence. The N.S.L. gained a powerful ally in Lord Roberts, who had become convinced during the South African War that Britain's military manpower resources were not equal to the requirements of modern war. Although he had taken part and approved of the C.I.D. policy decision on invasion, Roberts' speeches after mid-1905 dwelt increasingly on the theme of overseas attack. In his Mansion House speech of August 1, 1905, calling for rifle drill for boys and a "Home Defence Army", Roberts had hinted that even if circumstances should arise that would tend to make the despatch of a hostile army to our shores easier than it would be at present, a system such as I have sketched would not only place the country in absolute safety against invasion, but would render any attempt at invasion out of the question.¹

These comments were strongly criticized in official circles, and on November 25, 1905, Roberts resigned from the C.I.D., a week before the

1. Earl Roberts. Speeches and Letters on Imperial Defence. Simpkin, London, 1906. p. 52.

fall of Balfour's Government. Thereafter, Roberts' observations on invasion became stronger: on January 29, 1906, he referred to the untried and uncertain value of naval defences.

... granting all possible power and opportunity to your Fleets, I must express my opinion that without an adequate and efficient citizen Army, your shores and your homes are not safe. An invasion of this country, though improbable, is always possible.¹

Roberts called for a "Million Man Standard" for home defence as a compliment to the Navy's "Two Power Standard." Two weeks later, the N.S.L. published its manifesto, which advocated in part that

Every man of sound physique, without distinction of class, shall be logically liable during certain years of his life to be called upon to serve for the defence of of the United Kingdom in case of emergency of the existing Auxiliary Forces, and at the same time pave the way for their inclusion in a system of universal military service for Home Defence.²

Roberts' sincerity in the matter of invasion must remain a matter for speculation. In 1902 he had admitted that he had believed for many years that invasion was not impossible,³ but he had certainly given evidence of apparent conversion to C.I.D. policy in 1903.⁴ Roberts realised the propaganda value of invasion for his conscription campaign, but there is nothing in his correspondence to suggest that he was not in earnest, like Wolseley, Kitchener, and so many of his contemporaries, in fearing invasion. Almost his last words before his death in November 1914

1. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50350) Diary. 2 August 1905, 3 August 1905, 4 August 1905, 7 August 1905; Balfour MSS. (49702) Clarke to Balfour, 17 August 1905 and 25 August 1905; Esher. Journal and Letters. Vol. II. pp. 108, 110-113.

2. E.E. Mills. Op.Cit. p. 128.

3. Cab 3/1/5A "Minutes on 4A." 29 January 1902. p. 1.

4. Roberts MSS. Case X20931. Box A.2 Robert's Note on "Estimates." 22 November 1903. R4/13; Arnold Forster MSS. (50355) Diary. 27 October 1903.

expressed anxiety on this topic.¹ He was not equipped emotionally, or intellectually, to approach the problem in the analytical manner of the C.I.D. It seems safe to assume that Roberts was sincere in his fear of invasion, although his repeated warnings reinforced his attitude, which was the product of intuition and prejudice, rather than an exhaustive study of invasion as a strategical problem. That invasion as a propaganda theme aided the conscription campaign was certainly a subconscious factor in Roberts' reconversion, but in asserting publicly the dangers of invasion the Field-Marshal was reverting to type: the Victorian military hero whose experience had been limited to a series of colonial expeditions, and whose conceptions of large amphibious operations were the products of conjecture and prejudice rather than hard fact or experience.

A second large group of eminent Englishmen shared the N.S.L.'s belief in the danger of invasion, but could not support conscription, and were repelled by the N.S.L. manifesto. Strachey, for one, wrote Roberts that "the Manifesto was a great disappointment and surprise to me" and upheld the "voluntary principle" as the best foundation for home defence.²

Soon thereafter the National Defence Association was founded

to assist, by the action of its members, in the maintenance and co-ordination of land forces adequate to the needs of the United Kingdom and the Empire.³

Its executive committee included H.A. Gwynne, editor of the Standard, C.A. Pearson of the Daily Express, as well as Lord Roberts, Repington, Lord

1. Wilson Diary. 13 November 1914.

2. Strachey MSS. Strachey to Roberts, 16 February 1906.

3. Times, 26 December 1907. p. 6.

Lovat, and Sir Samuel Scott. Eminent members included Major J.E.B. Seeley, M.P., Lord Northcliffe, and Strachey.¹ In its meetings and official magazines, the St. Georges' Review and National Defence, the N.D.A. publicised the perils of invasion with the same enthusiasm as the N.S.L.² The two pressure groups were agreed on the invasion issue, and this allied them in common hostility to the Government's home defence policy.

While Lord Roberts served as the titular leader of those refusing to accept official assurance on invasion, Charles à Court Repington, military correspondent of the Times, was the most brilliant critic of Government policy. Repington had established a reputation as a lively writer and a brilliant thinker and was regarded as a future Chief of the General Staff, before his affair with the wife of a prominent British diplomat ruined his professional army career.³ Repington then became a military writer, and repeatedly warned in print against accepting Blue Water theories as mathematical truths, for these "infallible deductions" were only opinions, not necessarily shared by future enemy planning staffs.⁴ Like Roberts, however, Repington had briefly swung over to the Blue Water philosophy and had argued that invasion was unlikely.⁵ Just before Balfour had delivered his great speech on invasion in May, 1905, Repington had

1. Times. 14 January 1907. p. 8.

2. Sir George Goldie. "Lest We Forget." St. George's Review. May 1908. p. 6
National Defence. December 1908. p. 107 ff.

3. Jay Luvaas. The Education of an Army. Cassells, London, 1965, p. 297.

4. Captain à Court (Repington). "French Naval Policy in Peace and War." Nineteenth Century. January 1897. pp. 146-160; "Pensons Y Toujours." United Service Magazine. November 1896. pp. 218 ff.

5. Adm 116/3108. Clarke to Fisher, 14 September 1907.

written a series of articles in the Times, which criticised the baneful influence of invasion scares in the history of British strategy, as "leading to a misdirection of military policy by almost every British minister from Pitt downwards." During the Napoleonic scare of 1805, he wrote, "all that was done for many years was to create an amorphous mass of citizens in gorgeous uniforms."

The threat of invasion locked up all the manhood of England at home when one-quarter of their numbers, seriously organized, would have turned the scale to the side of our allies. Home defence by land forces, always indispensable as a precaution, was exaggerated beyond all measure and the true object of war was lost to sight.¹

Repington at this time anticipated that Balfour's speech would settle the question, and wrote a friend "I am in great hopes that Balfour will put the whole situation before the country when he speaks."²

But Balfour's speech instead produced a violent reaction on the part of Repington, who published a strongly critical article in the Times,³ and penned a long letter to Escher which explained his volte face.

Repington maintained

... the Defence Committee's opinions should be unassailable in point of fact and argument, that in fact they should be as infallible as a decree of a Pope, and they can only be this when they are based on a complete examination of the facts and a reasoned statement of incontrovertible deductions. If the arguments put forward by Mr. Balfour is an argument for anything it is an argument for a weak Navy and a weak Army. Read the debate in the House on the Finance Bill in yesterday's Times and you will see with what avidity the speech has been seized upon as the basis for a demand for

1. "Modern War: the Past." Times. 27 April 1905. p. 5.

2. Amery MSS, Box C.23 Repington to Amery, 24 April 1905.

3. "Parliament and Imperial Defence." Times. 15 May 1905. p. 7.

reduced expenditure all round! No one, I believe, in this country has taken more pains than I have to study the invasion problem; I have been to every port from the Atlantic to the North Sea and have considered the matter, with naval officers to assist me, from every point of view. I would willingly undertake the invasion of England under the hypothesis of the P.M. and would lay 7 to 4 upon my success ... I do not think that the political bias and training predisposes even a great statesman like Mr. Balfour to discuss strategical problems with the necessary precision and detachment.¹

Esher forwarded this letter to Balfour, and wrote to Repington that "I have never known you before to miss the points of a great argument", reiterating the C.I.D. case.

... thanks to the numbers, distribution, and mobility of our naval craft, we could make the landing of a large force within these islands an operation of such danger that it would never be attempted. But what is the imperative condition of this immunity? Why, a naval force so large and so mobile, that while the main Fleets may be temporarily absent in search of the main fleets of the enemy, we still have sufficient force within territorial waters to render the landing of troops an operation of war too dangerous to be undertaken. Is this an argument for the reduction of the Navy?

Esher's letter was published in the Times without comment by Repington,² who thereafter consistently taught that invasion was likely and possible.

It has proved impossible to discover just when Roberts and Repington began to conceive of a plan to force the Government to re-open the question of invasion, but, following their collaboration with Lord Lovat and Sir Samuel Scott on the N.D.A. Executive Committee, the two began to work together closely and a frequent correspondence began in July 1906. Although Repington had initially been critical of Roberts' conscription campaign and judged him "fearfully weak in argument",³ he now

1. Balfour MSS. (49718) Repington to Esher, 18 May 1905.

2. "Mr. Balfour and Imperial Defence." Times. 22 May 1905. p. 8.

3. Kitchener-Marker MSS. (52277) Repington to Marker. 2 January 1906.

began increasingly to encourage him behind the scenes,¹ Roberts and Repington together began to cultivate Major-General Spencer Ewart, Director of Military Intelligence, inviting him to meetings and to private dinners where invasion was discussed.² At the same time, Repington began to point to the possible dangers of invasion from Germany through the pages of the Times. On August 29, 1906, Repington published a famous article which revealed that von Moltke, the victorious strategist and organizer of the Franco-Prussian War, had planned an invasion of Denmark in 1864 over seas which Germany did not command. The expedition had been carried out, Repington emphasized,

when Prussia was practically without a fleet, without organized war harbours, without vast rooky commercial ports, without a perfected railway system, and without a great steam mercantile marine, all of which things she now possesses. Infallibly every German plan which considers operations overseas will base itself upon the 1864 precedent, since great names and great traditions carry irresistible weight.³

The operation had even more chilling ramifications, according to Repington: it had been conducted in absolute secrecy, had achieved complete surprise, and the destruction of all warships had been cheerfully accepted as the cost of success. An army corps had been transported across hostile waters in the space of one night. The article, with its apparent refutation of Blue Water dogma, touched off a lengthy controversy in the Times' correspondence columns which involved a number of authorities, including Arnold-Forster and Sir George Clarke, Secretary of the C.I.D.⁴

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1. Roberts MSS. Box X20927. Repington to Roberts. R62/3 28 July 1906; R62/6 15 August 1906; R62/7 23 October 1906.
 2. Ewart Diary. 31 July 1906, 26 September 1906, 20 November 1906.
 3. "Moltke and Overseas Invasion." Times. 29 August 1906. p. 6
 4. Times. 30 August 1906, p. 5; 1 September 1906, p. 10; 4 September 1906, p. 6; 5 September 1906, p. 6; 7 September 1906, p. 6; 8 September 1906, p. 6; 15 September 1906, p. 11; 17 September 1906, p. 5; 20 September 1906, p. 10; 22 September 1906, p. 10; Sydenham of Combe. My Working Life. Murray, London, 1927. p. 153.

The article was not without effect on policy-makers, for Balfour expressed his misgivings to Clarke on September 14th.

I should much like to see experiments made to show whether an enemy's Fleet with momentary command of the sea could really protect a great body of transports attempting to land upon the south or east coast - preferably the latter - for a period required, according to the most recent experiments, for disembarking a really large force. Some people tell me that my memorandum and speech on Imperial Defence, though based upon the latest available information, no longer represent the most recent views either as regards the number of men that can be carried per ton, or the rapidity at which they can be put on shore.¹

Clarke probably suspected the source of Balfour's doubts and replied reassuringly

Nothing has happened or is likely to happen which will in any way invalidate the reasoning of your speech. That reasoning was based upon the wholly impossible hypothesis that the mass of the British fleet in permanent commission was a long distance from our shores at a time when invasion was being incubated. Unless we imagine the Government and the Admiralty of the day to be absolutely imbecile, this could not happen. As you know, precautions have been undertaken at times when nothing of the nature of a real threat had occurred. ... As years go on we are likely as a nation to become more and more nervous, and the probability of our being caught as assumed in your Speech will, therefore, tend to become even less than at the present time.²

Clarke went on to explain that the official calculations had been based on the Clacton Manoeuvres, where rapid disembarkation had been aided by fine weather and "the assistance rendered by a powerful squadron of armoured cruisers, when boats, officers, and crews were so fully engaged in putting the troops on shore that the ships themselves ceased, during the operations, to be combatant units." There was a great difference between the C.I.D., and alarmists such as Lord Roberts who were

1. Balfour MSS. (49702) Balfour to Clarke. 14 September 1906.

2. Ibid. Clarke to Balfour. 20 September 1906.

in the habit of jumping to conclusions and thus of avoiding the trouble which is necessary to ascertain the limits of practical possibilities ... it all takes time, care, and trouble ... The mass of our people, however, dislike pure reason and resent its application, while soldiers as a body are not taught to reason when they are young, and when they find themselves in a position of authority they lack the habit and the time.¹

While Clarke wrung his hands over the gap between the Government and the public, Roberts and Repington continued their home defence campaign. In The Outlook, Roberts repeated his call for a "Million Man Standard", compulsory service for home defence, and a properly reorganized home army to meet enemy troops in Great Britain.² Repington wrote a series of articles on raids in the Times, and presented a paper criticizing the Blue Water position on invasion at an important meeting of the National Defence Association.³ The preparation of this paper brought Roberts and Repington into even closer collaboration. Repington sent Roberts an advance copy and suggested that they "decide upon the classification of the Blue Water theories into acceptable, doubtful, and unacceptable, and that we print a paper showing these three classes of theories..." He proposed also to send advance copies of his paper to "those who are likely to be on our side in the discussion. I do not see that we need send copies to the Blue Water men."⁴

Clarke, learning that Balfour was to attend this meeting, warned him that

The people you are dealing with ... are in earnest; most of them are well-meaning. They are, however, capable of doing a

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1. Balfour MSS. (49702) Clarke to Balfour. 20 September 1906.
 2. E.E. Mills. Op. Cit. pp. 83-84.
 3. Amery MSS. Box C.31. Repington to Amery, 26 October 1906.
 4. Roberts MSS. Box X20927. R62/8 Repington to Roberts. 8 November 1906.

large amount of mischief, as Repington of the Times has already done. They will of course aim at upsetting the arguments in your speech, with a view to create alarm and so pave the way for compulsory service.

It was plain the W.D.A. threatened official policy: "if people like Repington can succeed in persuading the country that the fleet is not a protection against invasion, then clearly we have no possible basis for military organization except compulsion, and this all thinking people must agree is utterly impracticable."¹ Balfour, however, was not deterred from attending, and Repington was quite pleased with the outcome, chiding Escher:

You thought that Mr. Balfour would never let pass the things I wrote in my paper. This time I altered the text and added a few things as I went on, but there was no substantial difference, yet A.B. supported me nearly throughout, and declared that he agreed with nearly every positive proposition that I had advanced ... All the Admirals spoke - Custance, Noel, and Bridge, but none of them ventured to tell us why we limit raids to 10,000 men, nor why two such raids can never occur, not yet how many raids make an invasion. In fact, they criticised very little, while Noel frankly said he did not belong to the Blue Water School and he said many things the public ought to know. I fear it will give George Clarke and Thursfield fits, and bring a whole flotilla of Navalists down on me. The more the merrier. Until we have out an end to all the damned nonsense that is written about sea power we shall never get our national army.²

Repington wrote in a similar vein to Roberts: "I daresay it may raise a controversy and I hope you will encourage the big people to join in ... I think we have pushed on Mr. Balfour much further than we could have dared to hope."³ Repington sensed the need to broaden the base of the invasion propaganda in order to counteract the academic prestige of the Blue Water School.

1. Balfour MSS. (49702) Clarke to Balfour, 15 November 1906.

2. Mr. John Gooch's notes on Escher MSS. Vol: "Army 1906." Repington to Escher, 22 November 1906.

3. Roberts MSS. Box X20927. E62/9 Repington to Roberts, 22 November 1906.

We are greatly in need of a strong civilian pen to back us up, as there is a curious idea in the country that great soldiers like your Lordship have some occult reasons for desiring to see their country strong and respected. The more frock-coats and mutton-chops we can whip up the better.¹

Repington's paper on the Blue Water School appeared in the Times on December 1st. He regarded it as an important link in the campaign against Government policy.² Repington's main thrust was to challenge the uncertainty of naval doctrine which, he believed, had been called into question by the events of the Russo-Japanese War. He represented that the Japanese had successfully flouted Blue Water dogmas and had emerged victorious, while British authorities remained mesmerised by untested theories which approached in complexity Calvin's theory of the Apocalypse. The Navalists failed to recognize the role of chance in war or that naval victories would mean nothing until substantiated by military conquests for, he charged, "the extravagant claims of the Blue Water fanatics paralyse the efforts of this country in its policy to obtain the Army to match the Navy of its needs."³ Repington followed up this article with others on the possibility of a German raid, and indulged in debate with Admiral Richard Vesey Hamilton in the correspondence columns. Behind the scenes he made renewed efforts to convert Ewart, Director of Military Operations, to his views. Ewart was twice invited to dinner with Repington, Roberts and Sir Samuel Scott, who had formed themselves as a committee to force an enquiry on German invasion from the Cabinet.⁵ Another member of the Group, Lord Lovat, gave a public lecture on invasion, which was based on information supplied by

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1. Roberts MSS. Box X20927. R62/10 Repington to Roberts. 28 November 1906.
 2. Kitchener-Marker MSS. (52277) Repington to Marker. 1 December 1906.
 3. "The Blue Water School." Times, 1 December 1906. p. 6.
 4. Ibid. 2 January 1907, p.12; 9 January 1907, p.12.
 5. Ewart Diary. 14 January 1907; 31 January 1907; 7 May 1907.

Ewart.¹

During early 1907, the agitation for an invasion inquiry increased in tempo. The Admiralty and the Blue Water writers naturally fought back, disparaging their opponents as "the bolt from the blue school", after their emphasis on Germany's supposed future act of "Black Treachery." Sir George Clarke, Secretary of the C.I.D., was encouraged by the Admiralty to write to the Times, castigating the "mischievous agitation" of Lord Roberts and his "schoolmen" in the House of Lords and elsewhere. He challenged them to consider that an enemy would have many efficacious ways of destroying British power without reverting to the dangers of invasion, such as an attack on the fleet while it was at manoeuvres, or a torpedo attack on Portsmouth by night. He declared "These things, and more of the same kind, must logically be contemplated by the Bolt out of the Blue School, if it ever resorts to a process of thinking."

At least it is clear that a rabble of men with the training proposed by the National Service League, however valuable as a body out of which an army might be created in a year, would be absolutely useless in the conditions postulated by the schoolmen.

Clarke ridiculed the alarmists; they asserted "at brief intervals that our huge defence charges do not suffice to secure us against hourly attack of the most appalling character."² The Editor of the Times agreed, and in a leader had noted that "an attitude of excessive fidget and fuss tends to defeat its own ends by deadening the sense of the people to the cry of national danger."³ Sir John Fisher, the First Sea Lord, thought so highly

1. Ewart Diary. 26 April 1907; 7 May 1907.

2. "The Bolt out of the Blue School." (by Clarke) Times. 29 March 1907. p.4.

3. Ibid. 19 February, 1907. p.10.

of Clarke's article that he had it reprinted as an official Admiralty memorandum. Roberts was also caught in a cross-fire of criticism from home defence advocates, such as Strachey and Lord Wemyss, who upheld the "voluntary principle."¹

But by June 1907 the "Committee of Four", made up of Lord Roberts, Repington, Lord Lovat, and Sir Samuel Scott, had completed their preliminary investigations into German invasion, and were ready to make their first overt assault on the Government's home defence policy. Lovat worked with Repington in making investigations of various aspects of the operation, while Scott financed the elaborate inquiries undertaken by the committee, which included several visits to Germany, and eventually cost "several thousand pounds."² The quartet visited Balfour at his home, and succeeded in persuading him that the invasion inquiry should be re-opened by the Government, on the basis that the main threat, which now came from Germany, had not been examined. Balfour had never believed that the 1903 conclusions were final, was readily aware of the ever-changing factors in the military and diplomatic scene,³ and forwarded memoranda produced by the quartet to the C.I.D. Admiral Fisher, who believed that the C.I.D. had settled the matter for all time, suspected that Balfour had cleverly shunted the quartet on to the Government, while holding that their arguments were nonsense.⁴ But Balfour was honestly impressed by their

1. Balfour MSS. (49711) Admiralty print. "The Bolt out of the Blue School" Ibid. Times 15 March 1907. p.14.

2. Esher. Journals and Letters. Nicholson, London, 1934. p. 357. Vol. II. Esher to Lord Knollys. 6 November 1908.

3. Hansard (Commons) 2 August 1904. col. 620.

4. Arnold-Forster MSS. (53535) Diary, 5 December 1907.

case and wrote Clarke that in many factors - higher maximum tonnage, number of transports, number of ports, and quality shipping facilities - Germany had more striking power than France, and could more readily carry out the attack with secrecy and speed.

Germany, according to the statements contained in the Notes, can more quickly collect transport, more quickly embark troops, more quickly disembark them. Its fleet, unlike that of France, is always concentrated precisely where it ought to be, in order to afford the best possible protection to an expeditionary force. Its merchant shipping is brought by the natural course of trade into the very ports where, on military grounds, it is most convenient to have it. Secrecy, therefore, as well as speed seems more within their reach. And though the distance to be traversed by the invaders is greater, the ships at their disposal are faster, and their course would probably lie farther from hostile fleets.¹

The Notes presented a "Bolt from the Blue" hypothesis, on the basis of much diligent research. The quartet claimed that the Germans could detach ten Army Corps from their army and despatch it quickly to the ports. Accelerated railway mobilization, developed since the Russo-Japanese War, could carry 48,000 men to the ships in six hours, and 140,000 more in 36 hours, if both up and down lines were used. Rapid liners, fitted with the most modern loading equipment available, could lower almost 10,000 troops at one drop, and two trips from the liners to the English shore would throw 20,000 men ashore in about an hour.² Very few horses and wagons would be taken, for this equipment could be commandeered in England. The operations could be disguised as manoeuvres and would be carried out without recourse to general mobilization. German governmental

1. Cab 3/2/1/42A "Invasion." Balfour to Clarke. 2 July 1907. pp. 6, 8.

2. Ibid. "Notes on Invasion Supplied to Mr. Balfour." pp. 10, 12-13.

control of all communications, and the fact that an overwhelming force could be sent in the first echelon, meant that the landing itself would be the first notice Britain would have of war. Moreover, Britain did not have local naval superiority in the North Sea.¹

In one of his last official duties as Secretary of the C.I.D., Clarke wrote a critique of Roberts' case. He granted most of the points brought forward by the "Committee of Four", regarding Germany's superior facilities for invasion as compared to France and agreed with Balfour.

It may, therefore, be desirable to review the question of invasion from the standpoint of Germany, more especially since the alleged danger is now frequently proclaimed by a section of the Press in terms well calculated to create public uneasiness.²

Clarke focused on the greatest weakness of the Committee's argument. Although they had exhaustively covered the details of the German mobilization arrangements on shore, they had almost completely neglected the most crucial aspect of the operation: the actual ocean crossing itself. As had been emphasized in previous C.I.D. papers, Clarke stressed that

The invading force directly it leaves port must face the most tremendous risks unless an unopposed passage can be counted upon, and these risks will evidently increase with the distance to be traversed and the time required for the voyage. The troops crowded in transports must be absolutely helpless from the period at which they quit the shelter of their harbours to the conclusion of the disembarkation. During this time the entire invading army will be reduced to the position of non-combatants liable to wholesale destruction by hostile war-ships and dependent for protection solely upon naval guardianship.³

Even in the past, when communication facilities were far more rudimentary, no preparation for an overseas expedition had ever been kept secret. The

1. Cab 3/2/1/42A "Invasion" . pp. 15-16.

2. Ibid. "Note by Secretary." G.S. Clarke. August, 1907. p.1.

3. Ibid. pp. 1-2.

recent Japanese landings had only taken place when the Russian fleet was reduced to a defensive role. The invasion of England would be feasible only "if the British fleet in home waters were ever reduced to the position of the Russian Far Eastern Squadron in 1904 ...". Other naval factors were equally disenchanting. The shortest distance between a German port (Hamburg) and the English coast was 360 miles, involving a 30 hour crossing at 12 knots speed. Transports from various ports would have to rendezvous close at sea, and the enterprise was dependent upon good weather. The seizure of foreign shipping at German ports, as well as the disruption of commerce brought about by the invasion preparations, would give early and unfailing warning of attack.

Clarke believed that the inevitable conclusion was that the fleet should be stationed in the North Sea. The active fleet in home waters, he urged, should never quit the Channel or the North Sea. He rejected the suggestion that Germany could achieve secrecy and surprise, and was certain that "at least four days would elapse between the commencement of invasion preparations in German harbours and the landing of an expeditionary force in England."¹ Writing privately to Balfour, however, Clarke indicated more concern than his official memorandum would imply. He was hopeful that "Lord Roberts and his friends will not countenance the preaching of panic". He feared his departure to India would encourage the Admiralty's attitude of hostility and non-cooperation towards the C.I.B. The outlook for the future was not bright.

... nothing is right in that Department of stoats at the present time. Wild ill-considered projects have usurped the place of mature and scientific thought with results that are beginning to be apparent.²

1. Cab 3/2/1/42A pp. 2 - 4.

2. Balfour MSS. (49702) Clarke to Balfour, 18 August 1907.

Conversely, Roberts and his fellow-conspirators were exultant. Repington wrote Roberts, "I think we have every reason to be satisfied with the manner in which Mr. Balfour has stated the case". Repington, however, shared Clarke's misgivings as to the attitude of the Admiralty, and was taking counter-measures.

I hear that the Admiralty desire to burke inquiry and discussion, to withhold investigation of the whole problem of Home Defence from a Sub-Committee of the C(ommittee) of D(efence).., and to rest content with a bald reply of the usual official type. Lord Esher was to have seen Mr. Balfour last night, and will, I hope, have induced him to refuse to be content with such an evasion of public duty .. if you can see your way to approach Sir Henry C(ampbell)-B(arnes) and to impress upon him the necessity for full investigation by the Morley Sub-Committee, and to state that we shall be satisfied with nothing less, I think you will be performing a very important public service.¹

The agitation for a re-opening of the invasion question caught the Admiralty, and Sir John Fisher, at an awkward time. The introduction of the Dreadnought was still the object of much controversy and criticism, and the rift between Fisher and Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, C-in-C, Channel Fleet, was widening and beginning to become a matter of public knowledge. There were the beginnings of ominous rumblings in the press for a public enquiry into Admiralty policy.² To Fisher, the "Bolt from the Blue" hypothesis brought forward by Roberts and his compatriots bore a strong resemblance to the arguments used by Beresford in his increasingly insubordinate communications with his superiors. Beresford had already been censured by the Board in June for arguing the possibilities of a surprise attack: "a diametrically opposite view" to that held by the Admiralty. Beresford had gone so far as to criticize Admiral A.K. Wilson, C-in-C, Home Fleet, for saying that 100,000 invaders landed in England would be

1. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. Box R.1 R62/11 Repington to Roberts, 20 August 1907.

2. Donald M. Schurmann. Seminar paper on "Invasion 1907-1908."

foredoomed to surrender. Beresford wrote the Admiralty

Sir Arthur Wilson evidently does not know military opinion on this matter, nor can he be aware of the real state and strength of the British Army in England at the present moment, or the want of preconceived arrangements for the concentration of the scattered military forces at any definite point.¹

Beresford was threatening to resign in protest against Admiralty policy, and a copy of a paper by him on "The Proposed Inquiry into Admiralty Policy" later found its way to their Lordships.²

It was therefore not surprising that Fisher was exceedingly sensitive regarding the re-opening of the invasion question. Although he had brought about a revolution in naval materiel by the introduction of the Dreadnought, Fisher was not strong in the field of strategy and it was here that his enemies concentrated their attacks. Like Roberts, official leader of the "invasionists", Fisher also was dependent upon a brains trust of younger men who furnished him with arguments and strategic ideas. Fisher had earlier employed Julian Corbett, a brilliant civilian teacher of strategy at the Naval War College, to challenge Repington's arguments in the columns of the Times. Fisher also turned to Captain Edmond Slade, the Commandant of the Naval War College, and soon to become D.W.I., to produce a crushing critique of the "Notes" which the quartet had presented to the C.I.D. through Balfour. Slade and Corbett collaborated closely and produced an extensive 20 page commentary on the Notes, which indicated that the important distinction between a raid and invasion had not been made. They

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1. Adm 116/3108 "Miscellaneous Papers dealing with the antagonism of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford to the Policy and Administrative Arrangements of the Board of Admiralty, 1906-1909." Beresford to Admiralty, p. 9.
 2. Ibid. "The Proposed Inquiry into Admiralty Policy." by Beresford, p. 16. January 1908.

wrote that "we at Naval War College have studied War Games and out of many simulated attacks only one got to destination undetected. Even then it was caught and destroyed. This refers to raids not invasions." ¹ As had Clarke, Slade and Corbett granted Roberts' case on behalf of Germany's facilities ashore, but emphasized that two days' warning of impending attack would still be forthcoming. Invasion would be possible only if two powers joined against England, and such an alliance would make the problem of secrecy insuperable. The pair listed recent steps taken by the Admiralty against overseas attack: a naval force was now permanently established in the North Sea, and a destroyer and submarine base existed on the East coast, near to the supposed landing place. They drew attention to the fact that defence against invasion did not necessarily involve naval superiority, but only a force strong enough to destroy the troop transports, not the entire German High Seas Fleet. ²

Fisher expounded his views on invasion in a memorandum which he circulated to the Prime Minister and other members of the C.I.D., which began

A PRELIMINARY protest must be made against the assumption that any one except the Board of Admiralty have any claim to speak with authority as to the adequacy of the naval defences of these islands.

A series of categorical statements followed to the effect that Roberts and his colleagues, "however distinguished in other fields have no claim what-
knowledge
ever to special/of naval administration." Admiralty operational planning

1. Richmond MSS. RIC 9/1 "Memorandum by Head of War College: Invasion and Raids." E.J.W. Slade. 16 August 1907. p. 17.

2. Ibid. p. 20.

involved "matters upon which no information is ever likely to be available to outsiders ... it is the Admiralty's business to decide, and to keep its own counsel on such matters." Fisher adopted the same pre-emptory tone with regard to invasion: recent naval developments not understood by outsiders, such as wireless, torpedo-boats, submarines, and the recent redistribution of the fleet, all made "the idea of an unopposed landing on a large scale absolutely chimerical ... it is a fact, in the deliberate judgment of the Admiralty, that a serious German invasion of these islands is impossible."¹

Professor Schurmann has remarked that

It was an angry paper, for obvious reasons. Often it shifted from quoting Balfour's two memos - on invasions and raids - without distinguishing them, and it is probable that he thought invasions and raids were in the same category. He thus exhibited for the first time in this enquiry the dangerous tendency to ignore fine distinctions considered important by his chosen advisors. Similarly, in hitting out at his opponents he neglected to distinguish between 'Roberts and Co.' on the one hand, and the responsible officers at the War Office on the other ... It was very Fisher - good ideas ruined by lack of tact, too much pugnacity, and a disdain for the serious opinions of other men.²

The violence of Fisher's language and his arrogant argument for Admiralty autonomy did nothing to improve his already strained relations with the Cabinet and the C.I.D. Haldane was incensed that Fisher adopted "the silly ground that the question is for the Navy alone" and persuaded the Prime Minister to schedule the opening of the inquiry for that November.³ Clarke wondered "can you imagine a more absurd contention?"⁴ Esher, who was in close touch with Repington, was furious and wrote to Haldane, Campbell-Bannerman, and Fisher himself, in protest.⁵

1. Campbell-Bannermann MSS . (52519) "Covering Memorandum by the First Sea Lord." J.A. Fisher. 22 September 1907. p. 1.

2. Schurmann. Op. Cit.

3. Esher. Op. Cit. Haldane to Esher, 23 August 1907. pp. 246-47.

4. Roberts MSS. Case X20930. Clarke to Roberts, 28 August 1907. R29/15.

5. Esher. Op. Cit. Esher to M.V. Brett. 24 August 1907. p. 247.

What on earth do you mean by maintaining that a paper written by Mr. Balfour for the Defence Committee is "purely an Admiralty business"? and talking of "An irresponsible sub-committee"? (a) Mr. Balfour's original memorandum was a Defence Committee paper, and his speech in the House of Commons was based upon it, and not upon any Admiralty decision. (b) The Committee of Imperial Defence, of which the Prime Minister is the Chief, and its sub-committees, if appointed by the Prime Minister, are every bit as "responsible" as the Board of Admiralty ...¹

Matters were not improved when Repington published another series of articles on invasion in the Times.² These roused Fisher to fury, and he complained that

Repington calmly and with cool insistence dictates to the Admiralty what the Naval arrangements should be to render the problem of invasion impossible, and has the audacity to make absolutely unfounded statements implying that the responsibility of directing the Naval forces of this country is distributed "amongst several semi-independent Sea-Wardens round the Coast"! and that the Naval force permanently stationed in Home waters is inadequate to cope with the German Fleet.³

There were indeed sensitive issues with Fisher, for they were suspiciously similar to charges being made officially against the Board by Fisher's rival, Beresford. Fisher exhorted Sir George Clarke to write another reply to Repington in the Times: "I hope that at your last salute before leaving England you will fire a broadside at Repington that will sink him." Clarke replied that he agreed regarding "the ignorant and injurious rubbish which Repington is permitted to print in the "Times" ... which does great harm in unsettling people's minds and warping policy." But he advised Fisher to look to the C.I.D. for deliverance from the invasion

1. Esher. Op. Cit. Esher to Fisher. 29 August 1907. pp. 247-48.

2. Times. 10 September 1907. p. 6.

3. Adm 116/3108. Fisher to Clarke, 12 September 1907.

bogey, for afterwards, "with two Governments of opposite parties in agreement, the Repington School will be discredited."¹

Fisher, however, refused to trust to the C.I.D. and let loose his own dogs of war on Repington and Roberts. Corbett, who had defended Fisher in print on earlier occasions,² was prevailed upon again to help the public to experience "the returning warmth of security and bliss in finding that 40 million Pomeranian Grenadiers can't be landed in five minutes."³ Soon a number of naval authorities, including Admiral Cyprian Bridge, were taking Repington severely to task in the correspondence columns of the Times,⁴ criticising his unhistorical "Bolt from the Blue" hypothesis, and his neglect of the naval side of the problem. "Navarchus" voiced naval suspicions regarding Repington's motives.

Can it be that all this elaborate calculation of tonnages, this suggestion of Black Treachery, this threat of a Bolt from the Blue, are mere stage thunder? Is the real object to force conscription upon us, which we have never required, and which can never give us the overseas army we need? ... Those who labour for such an end are setting back the hands of a clock, and endeavouring to undo the great good, in the strategical education of the people, that has been done.⁵

Repington, too, found allies in the war of words. He enlisted the aid of his friend Leo Maxse, editor of the National Review, in his campaign against Admiralty policy. This was congenial work indeed for Maxse, who

1. Adm 116/3108. Clarke to Fisher, 14 September 1907.

2. (Julian Corbett) "Recent Attacks on the Admiralty." Nineteenth Century. February 1907; D.M. Schurmann, Op. Cit.

3. A.J. Marder. Fear God and Dread Nought. Cape, London, 1956. Vol. II, pp. 137-38. Fisher to Corbett, 28 September 1907.

4. Times. 18 September 1907, p.10; 21 October 1907, p.6; Repington, "German Naval Policy." 11 October 1907, p.8; 12 October 1907, p.6; 18 October 1907, p.10; 19 October 1907, p.8.

5. Ibid. 19 October 1907, p. 8.

was publishing monthly diatribes against Fisher who, he claimed, was "worth at least five battleships to Germany." Accordingly, he made use of the invasion controversy as an additional means to belabour Fisher, and began to add an alarming commentary on the dangers of invasion in every issue of the National Review. Repington's arguments appeared as well in the United Service Magazine.¹

Repington, for his part, was so eager "to expose the fallacies of the Blue Water extremists now or never" that he had run afoul of the Times management for publishing an article on invasion in the National Review, which they had rejected. He defended himself by replying that the Times editors were

not of my way of thinking on the subject and are what I call perverts on the whole subject of Blue Water doctrines. Anyway I have not had one syllable of Editorial support in my campaign on this subject, and it has been a vexation to me ... I wanted the Times to have been the lever and to have got the credit, but failing the Times I have got where I wanted without it.²

While the controversy spread to the editorial pages of various journals, the officials behind the scenes continued to put pressure on Fisher. Fisher, who was collaborating somewhat with Repington, tried to convince the Admiral of the dangers of inflexibility and over-confidence in approaching national defence problems. He lectured Fisher saying that

under democratic forms of government, no question is "laid aside for ever" or can be settled by the Obiter Dicta of any

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1. Repington. "Invasion." National Review. November 1907. pp. 468-484; Mase. "The Problem of Invasion." Ibid. October 1907, pp. 171-72; 174-179; National Defence. "November 1907. pp. 335-36; H.W. Wilson. "Defenceless Scotland." Ibid., December 1907, pp. 572-590; Alsager Pellock. "A Bolt from the Blue." Ibid., August 1908. pp. 877-889; see also "Episodes of the Month". Ibid. December 1907, pp. 503-04; January 1908, pp. 679-682; February 1908, p. 842; "The Possibility of Invasion." United Service Magazine. December 1907. pp. 248-51.
 2. History of the Times 1884-1912. Times, London, 1947. p. 843. Repington to Bell, 4 December 1907.

Statesman, however powerful and capable ... an invasion scare is the will of God which grinds you out a Navy of Dreadnoughts, and keeps the British people war-like in spirit. So do not be scornful and sit not with Pharisees!¹

Fisher refused to be chastened, and responded with a bitter attack on Nicholson, his opposite number in the War Office who, he knew, had "fought to the death for the invasion theory" during the 1903 inquiry² and whom he now suspected was conniving in Repington's plot.

That d—d Sea Lawyer, Sir William Beezelbub (Mr. Haldane and his friends call him 'Old Nick', I believe! He'll sell them all. He's hairy about the hooks!) will trot out reams of foolscap and miles of railway sidings at Hamburg and Bremen, and millions of German soldiers who can get in and out of a train in five seconds, but what the hell does he know about the Navy or invasion? NOTHING!³

Fisher believed Repington was morally unscrupulous, "ready to fight on either side", but had for some reason now thrown in his lot with those "who think this mischievous agitation will help with compulsory service"⁴.

Esher, however, thought a little controversy would do Fisher good, believing "nothing can be better for him than a little opposition, and the dire necessity of having to argue his case!"⁵ He wrote Fisher that his sole wish was to give him "glimpses of other sides of questions upon which you feel strongly."

You naturally believe that Sir John Fisher can rule the Navy, and secure this country against invasion, without assistance from outside the walls of the Admiralty. But are you so confident about Sir John Fisher's successors? i.e. Lord Charles

1. Esher. Op. Cit. p. 249. Esher to Fisher, 1 October 1907.

2. Campbell-Bannerman MSS. (52519) Fisher to Ponsonby, 15 October 1907.

3. Marder. Op. Cit. Fisher to Esher, 7 October 1907. p. 145.

4. Ibid. p. 147. Fisher to Prince of Wales, 16 October 1907.

5. Esher. Op. Cit. p. 250. Esher to Morley, 8 October 1907.

Beresford and C. Bellairs? Invasion may be a bogey.
Granted. But it is a most useful one ...

Esher accused Fisher of trying to make permanent the One Man Rule of wartime in time of peace, and again advised him to use the C.I.D. as the foundation of his policy, instead of regarding it as a rival source of authority.¹

While Fisher grudgingly reconciled himself to the invasion inquiry, Repington worked feverishly to prepare his case. He was engaged in a debate with navalists in the pages of the Times, was conferring regularly with Roberts, and was planning a quick visit to Germany for purposes of reconnaissance. In addition he had established contact with Beresford and his chief of staff, Sturdee. Repington informed Roberts that he was looking forward to the C.I.D. inquiry and was

most anxious that these and other practical men shall be examined, for they seem to be far from satisfied that they can defend these shores with existing arrangements, or rather the lack of them. I fear that Sir John Fisher fears that awkward questions may arise and is opposed to inquiry.²

He asked Roberts to persuade Beresford to remain at his post until he had given evidence against the Admiralty.³ Beresford cooperated with Repington and provided him with much confidential information, such as the war speed of the Channel Fleet, the draught of the Dreadnought "and various other details" including the distribution map of all ships in home waters. Beresford warned Repington regarding the inquiry:

1. Esher. Op. Cit. p. 251. Esher to Fisher, 15 October 1907.

2. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. R62/12 Repington to Roberts, 22 October, 1907.

3. Ibid. R62/14 Repington to Roberts, 19 November 1907.

... I know my friend Fisher very well, and am perfectly confident that what he wants to do is pack it with his own people of which there are six besides himself, and say he had a Committee of responsible people and there was nothing in the statements made by us. What we want is a Public Enquiry ... the late Manoeuvres have proved that we are so short of small cruisers and Torpedo Boat destroyers, that invasion is not only possible but probable if the Germans take the right line.¹

Beresford called on Repington and offered advice regarding the hypothetical plan of attack which was to be presented to the C.I.D. He expressed his confidence that the Germans could hold the Straits of Dover for 48 hours and promised that "if he is asked whether a German invasion can take place at present his answer will be in the affirmative."² Beresford in addition visited General Sir John French, who was a member of the C.I.D., delivering a blistering attack on Fisher and imploring that he be called to give evidence against him. News of Beresford's manoeuvres reached Fisher, who informed Corbett

Repington's object is specially to call Beresford to give evidence against the Admiralty. A scandal impossible to tolerate but a splendid platform for Beresford to resign on! ... He is dying to stump the country, but wants to go off in fireworks.³

The Committee of Four were also receiving help unofficially from the War Office. Brigadier-General Sir Henry Rawlinson and Colonel G.G. Aston, both connected with the Army Staff College, as well as Colonel Stackpole and Major Strachan, the military embarkation officers at Southampton, were helping Repington in his calculations of overseas transport arrangements.⁴ There are also indications that Esher was

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1. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. R62/63. Beresford to Repington. 17 Nov. 1907.
 2. Ibid. R62/26 Repington to Roberts. 24 November 1907.
 3. Esher Op.Cit. p.262, 24 November 1907. Marder Op.Cit. p.152 Fisher to Corbett. 4 December 1907.
 4. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. R62/14 Repington to Roberts, 30 Oct. 1907
(contd. next page)

furnishing Repington with information from the C.I.D., although Esher believed that

The hypothesis - the Bolt out of the Blue - upon which Lord Roberts' case is founded, is absurd. For what is to them a decisive engagement, they could have chosen a better position. Can they, at the eleventh hour, shift their ground?¹

Repington presumably learned of Esher's criticism, for he prepared a "prompting sheet" for Lord Roberts stressing that the hypothesis that the Committee of Four had chosen was merely an example, and there were several others equally as valid, such as the absence of the Fleet on duties elsewhere, a sudden incident leading immediately to war, or the formation of a German coalition of one or more powers against Britain. Repington believed that the case for invasion must be kept as broadly-founded as possible.² Roberts produced as his contribution a long list of witnesses whom he proposed to call to testify to the German danger. It included, in part, the British ambassador at Berlin, the British consuls at the ten main German ports, Beresford, Sturdee, the last three First Naval Lords and Directors of Naval Intelligence, the Inspector-General of Fortifications, the Director of Military Training, the last four Military Attachés at Berlin, Lord Rothschild, and the Prince of Wales.³ Esher was unimpressed by this "very long and rather absurd list."⁴

Repington's letters to Roberts confirm Fisher's suspicions that

4. (contd. from p.347) R62/16 Repington to Roberts 5 November 1907.

1. Esher. Op.Cit.p. 262. 24 November 1907.

2. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. R62/25 Repington to Roberts, 20 November 1907.

3. Ibid. R62/19 Repington to Roberts, 12 November 1907.

4. Esher. Op. Cit. p. 257. 16 November 1907.

he was the éminence grise of the invasion inquiry, for he catechised Roberts as an experienced lawyer would prime a prize witness:

We must say and lay great stress upon the fact, that no matter how strong our Navy, the main deterrent to invasion is a numerous and efficient army, and the main temptation to invasion the reverse state of affairs: that this fact is particularly true of great maritime states in which soldiers have the predominant influence, and that consequently even if the Navy were double as strong relatively to other powers as it is, the necessity of maintaining a strong and efficient field army at home would still be an essential condition of peace and security, as well as of public confidence.¹

Fisher as well prepared for the confrontation. Slade had recently been installed as D.N.I. and Fisher wisely left the preparation of the Admiralty's defence in his and Corbett's hands. Corbett, after a conference with Fisher and a meeting with Repington, was entrusted with the responsibility of drafting the naval reply to the papers that Roberts and Repington were to present to the C.I.D.² Slade used the facilities of the Naval War College and the historical knowledge of Sir John Colomb to investigate the strategic side of the invasion problem and was relieved to discover that Repington had completely misunderstood von Moltke's "invasion" project against Denmark in 1864, which had played an important role in the arguments of the "invasionists." He wrote Corbett that "Repington has quite mistaken the meaning of the whole thing. He might just as well talk of the passage of the Danube by the Russians as an invasion."³ As his brain trust toiled behind

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1. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. R62/25 Repington to Roberts, 20 November, 1907.
 2. Corbett MSS. Box 6. Slade to Corbett, 28 October 1907; 5 November 1907; 14 November 1907, 18 November 1907, 21 November 1907; Richmond MSS. RIC 9/1 Fisher to Corbett, 7 November 1907.
 3. Corbett MSS. Box 6. Colomb to Corbett, 15 November 1907-14 January 1908. Slade to Corbett, 22 November 1907.

the scenes, Fisher refuted his critics publicly in a challenging speech at the Guildhall Banquet on November 9, 1907.

I turn to all of you and I turn to my countrymen and I say- Sleep quiet in your beds (laughter and cheers) and do not be disturbed by these bogeys - invasion and otherwise - which are being periodically resuscitated by all sorts of leagues (laughter)... This afternoon I read the effusions of a red-hot and most charmingly interesting magazine editor (Maxse) ... that an army of 100,000 German soldiers had been practising embarking in the German fleet... You might just as well talk of practising embarking St. Paul's Cathedral in a penny steamer (laughter). These stories are not only silly, they are mischievous, very mischievous. (Hear, Hear.)¹

While the factions prepared their arguments for the invasion inquiry, the Cabinet met on November 5th and named the members of the sub-committee which was to hear evidence. The chairman was H.H. Asquith, Chancellor of the Exchequer, soon to become Prime Minister. He was assisted by Lloyd George, President of the Board of Trade, Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Minister, Lord Tweedmouth, the First Lord, Haldane, the Earl of Crewe, the President of the Council, Escher, Fisher, Slade, the D.N.I., Generals Lytellton and Nicholson, successive Chiefs of the General Staff, Ewart, the D.M.O., French, the I.G.F., and Ottley, the C.I.D. Secretary. From both the military and political viewpoints, it was an illustrious tribunal, and its eminence testifies to the importance of the issue of invasion.²

The first session of the sub-committee, on November 27, 1907, opened with Roberts reading a statement (actually written by Repington)

1. Times. 11 November 1907. p. 11.

2. Cab 16/3A "Report and Proceedings of a Sub-Committee Appointed by the Prime Minister to Reconsider the Question of Overseas Attack," 22 October 1908. p. viii.

covering general principles. It emphasized that invasion was the only means by which Germany could take the initiative or deal decisively with Britain in a future war. Secrecy would be possible owing to the dictatorial powers of the German government in time of war, for state control of railways, telegraphs, and passenger steamers would certainly prevent any advance warning from seeping out. It was also possible that British authorities could be effectively distracted by false information. The Firth of Forth was the most likely German landing place, as it was near a large city, and was distant from any British naval base. Roberts declared that there was "a terrible chance that a Germany army might get into this country ... as regards this point, the Fleet could give us no protection whatsoever." But the most tangible argument for invasion was that "within one single decade Germany has created, taking ships and men together, and counting intellectual organization as well as mechanical resources, the greatest sea power that has yet existed, except our own."¹

Repington followed with a longer statement dealing with the course of the German attack. He visualised a landing at Edinburgh and Leith, after which the high-speed German liners would scatter and return to Germany, hoping to elude the Royal Navy. The invader would seize Glasgow and the Clyde towns and, leaving a rear-guard in the north, would sweep "southwards on a broad front, seizing, ransoming, and terrorizing town after town." If the invaders landed in the autumn, they could live off the harvest; in any event, they would be the last to

1. Cab 16/3A. 22 October 1908. p. 10.

starve. Repington called upon the sub-committee to investigate the numbers of troops assigned to home defence, and the time required to collect them, as well as the arrangements made for their transportation and supply. He wondered if there was any central authority for the defence of the island as a whole, and emphasized that the Territorial Force still lacked organisation, guns, and transport, as well as services of supply, ordinance, and medicine.¹ Roberts had concluded in a similar vein:

when I see the skeletons to which our Regular battalions of the line are reduced at home; when I observe the youth of the boys in the ranks, and when I consider the immense difficulties which will arise in assembling the reserves, in collecting horses, and providing for all the requirements of war in a country, which has been taught with criminal short-sightedness, to regard invasion as an impossible contingency, I fear that even our brave young fellows at ² home will fight under conditions of extreme disadvantage.

Repington and Roberts had stated the Bolt from the Blue argument with a vengeance, but, like all previous "invasionists", they had almost completely neglected the naval side of the problem. Esher, however, was initially impressed, recalling that

Lord Roberts' peroration, delivered with rhetorical emotion, was very well done. Repington put his case, and the mass of information, and carefully compiled detail, were impressive. Fisher was full of wrath. I said to him that he was fond of quoting Mahan's famous passage about Nelson's storm-tossed ships, upon which the Grand Army had never looked, which stood between it and the dominion of the world; and it should remind him that the Defence Committee, upon which he wished he had never looked, stood between him and a ³ Royal Commission to enquire into the state of the Navy...

Repington was satisfied and wrote Roberts that "we have done a good

1. Cab 16/3A. 22 October 1908. pp. 29-33.

2. Ibid. p. 7.

3. Esher. Op. Cit. p. 263 /27 November 1907.

day's work".¹ He suspected that Fisher would try "to palm off some statement of his own as a complete answer to us and to evade the calling of witnesses. In this case, what was the use of a Committee?"

Repington continued:

both Lyttelton and Fisher are not unlikely to appear in the white sheets of penitents, and as fellows in misfortune they may combine against us. Much hangs on Nicholson and French. If they are bold and strong we may have a strong inquiry, but I am by no means certain what the result of the next meeting will be.²

Lord Lovat, another of the conspirators, wrote to Repington

I think you have scored off the Fisherites severely - but I agree that for the future it should be most clearly brought out that it is not a personal battle. If Fisher is rude, which he certainly was, let him hang himself by putting himself out of sympathy with his Committee.³

The dominant reaction at the Admiralty, however, was relief.

Slade, the D.W.I., observed that "it was the old story over again only in greater detail. Lord Roberts was frankly asking for conscription, almost in so many words." The naval authorities resolved not to challenge Repington's estimates on the ease of German concentration of troops on land, but instead to concentrate on the weak point of his case: the almost complete neglect of the naval aspect of the operation. Slade and Corbett together worked out the Admiralty's reply.⁴ Fisher sought Balfour's support and sent him various papers, which he thought would completely smash forever "the Invasion Begey."⁵ Roberts, he

1. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. R62/27 Repington to Roberts, 27 Nov. 1907.

2. Ibid.

3. Sir Francis Lindley. Lord Lovat: 1871-1933. Hutchinson, London, 1935, p. 117. Lovat to Repington, 1 December 1907 (incorrectly dated 1908).

4. Corbett MSS. Box 6. Slade to Corbett. 27, 28 November 1907.

5. Balfour MSS. (49712) Fisher to Balfour, 29 November 1907.

charged, "was no use at all ... mere putty in Repington's hands," and Repington was "a man who had been kicked out of the army and turned out of all his Clubs." But, Fisher believed, "the fight was still to come, and that he was going to win."¹ Slade, however, had different purposes in mind.

The more I think of the invasion business the more I am pleased that it should have come up, as we ought now to have a very good chance of shewing that the Army and Navy are not two separate forces, but only divisions of one force which should never be thought of as apart from each other.²

The diversity of the two men's philosophy and approach prefigured a conflict between Fisher's view of a virtually autonomous Navy, and Slade and Corbett's vision of a unified amphibious strategy which embodied both services. Where Fisher was fighting for the independence and predominance of the Senior Service, his subordinates were trying to work out a conciliation between the Army and Navy, which would allow them to cooperate in national defence.

At the next meeting of the C.I.D., on December 12, 1907, Corbett's memorandum on invasion was circulated, which stated the full "amphibian" position. Corbett, following previous C.I.D. arguments, noted that the development of technology always redounded to the advantage of the defence. The only recent development favouring the Germans was the increase in the speed of the transports. But this was cancelled out by the speed of cruisers and battleships, which had risen even more. Corbett estimated that with the development of the torpedo and the submarine, the power of the defence had increased tenfold. In addition, Britain enjoyed a geographic advantage over Germany which she had never held over France or Spain. Her historic enemies had possessed Atlantic seaports which threatened Britain's Imperial communications and her Western coast, which meant

1. Arnold-Forster MSS. (50353) Diary, 5 December 1907.

2. Corbett MSS. Box 6. Slade to Corbett, 1 December 1908.

that the Royal Navy was always required to disperse its forces. Germany, however, was limited in war to a comparatively small outlet on the Atlantic, which could be easily guarded against German feints and diversions.¹

Corbett also pointed out that the objective of the defending fleet would not be the enemy fleet, but the invading army in its transports. Therefore, naval defence against invasion was based not on the main fleet, which was to prevent only the intervention of the enemy's main fleet, but rather on the secondary forces - the defensive flotilla. It was not even necessary for Britain to command the seas over which the invasion passed: all she had to do was to effectively contest the passage, as the enemy could not proceed without gaining command of the sea. Corbett pilloried those who, like Repington, pointed to the ease of the Japanese landings in 1904 as proof of the ease of invasion. This incident had no bearing on the British defence situation, for there had been no defending flotilla or troops near the landing point. Corbett quoted "the simple old rule."

Treat the invading army and its transports as our primary objective. See that by a proper disposition of cruiser squadrons and defence flotillas they cannot cross without escort. Let no temptation induce us to move our battle fleet out of reach of a position interior (in regard to the enemy's battle fleet) to the army's line of passage. Then we shall be certain of forcing upon the enemy the primitive crude form of invasion which ever since 1587 has been regarded universally as a practically impossible operation of war.²

Corbett thus reinforced the argument used by Balfour and the C.I.D. since 1903: that second-line forces were sufficient to stop invasion. Sea superiority was not necessary.

1. Cab 16/3A. "Appendix XVI: Memorandum by Director of Naval Intelligence on invasion in Reply to the Memorandum Presented by Lord Roberts and Colonel Repington." n.d., but distributed to sub-committee, 12 December 1907, pp. 21-22.

2. Ibid. p. 20.

His other main point was also in the tradition of Balfour's papers, although it was still a matter of controversy at the Admiralty. Corbett admitted that the War Office had a full partnership in the joint task of national defence. He began saying that "The first point to emphasize is that, to make naval defence absolutely secure, a home army should exist of a certain strength", sufficient to force an enemy to bring across 70,000 to 100,000 troops if he wished to conquer the island, which would involve a flotilla of such size that it could not evade the fleet. A local military organisation was also required to deal with raids, so that these would not be a distraction to the fleet or the national war effort. All these capabilities seemed provided for by the Territorial Army. Corbett concluded

... the Navy may give an emphatic repudiation to the idea that it regards resistance to invasion as a purely naval problem. It regards it essentially as a problem of combined strategy, and desires nothing so much as a thorough and reasoned understanding between the two services as to their respective functions in that behalf.¹

This was indeed a contentious doctrine in the Admiralty, for it was well known that Fisher believed that only "five men or none" could evade the fleet and land on British soil. Corbett's memorandum was, therefore, the product of a long uphill fight involving himself and Slade against Tweedmouth and Fisher who, Slade attested,

were very anxious to go back to the contention that the navy can guarantee that nothing comes across, and the army will never be needed, but I don't want to put it in such a bald way. It will only get the military backs up all round. We want them to see that they are required, and that they are contributing to the defence of the country ... I have discussed it all with Ewart, and he is quite sound.²

The irascible Tweedmouth had "wanted to cut out all reference to the Army, and I had a great fight with him", Slade recorded; Fisher as well was

1. Cab 16/3A. 12 December 1907. p. 20.

2. Corbett MSS. Box 6. Slade to Corbett, 20 December 1907.

fearful that the Admiralty would get itself "into a hornet's nest" by such concessions.¹ But the younger men prevailed over their inflexible superiors, and their close contact with Ewart helped to correlate Army and Navy policy. The personal friendship of Slade, the D.W.I., and Ewart, the D.M.I., aided this rapprochement between the two services.

Corbett's paper was therefore a valuable basis of agreement between the Admiralty and the War Office, and it had been well received by the C.I.D. Even Fisher conceded the "Magnum Opus" had "swept the board." Slade reported that

Mr. Haldane said to me that it was one of the most important State Papers that he had ever seen. Several of the members said that they did not know what the naval side of the question was before. When I got to the Committee room this morning I met Sir J. French on the stairs - and he said to me, I see the process of pulverisation has begun - referring to your memorandum.²

However, Repington had also been busy and had circulated a paper on "Some Naval Failures", designed to prove that the Navy could fail in its role as a shield against invasion. But Corbett found its arguments irrelevant and its object unclear. It did not really refer to the issue, he complained; it "simply amounts to an assertion that naval operations are subject to uncertainty. Everyone knows that."³

The C.I.D. meeting itself had been set aside for the cross-examination of Repington and Roberts. The favourable impression created for the Admiralty by Corbett's memorandum was somewhat offset by an acrimonious attack on

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1. Corbett MSS. Box 6. 9, 24 December 1907.
 2. Ibid. 12 December 1907; Balfour MSS. (49712) Fisher to Balfour, 23 December 1907.
 3. Richmond MSS. RIC 9/1 "Notes by JSC on 'Notes'"; Roberts MSS. Case X29027. Box R.1 R62/28, Repington to Roberts, 4 December 1907, R62/30, 7 December 1907, R62/31, 10 December 1907.

Roberts by Tweedmouth, who even Fisher found "too bloodthirsty."¹ Tweedmouth demanded of the Field-Marshal

... what were the inducements which caused you to take up the case brought forward by this little ring of what I may call, I think, very wild, though self-convinced, alarmists, and to bring it before us. You have made yourself rather the mouthpiece and the authority for their statements.²

Roberts' dignified demeanour in the face of Tweedmouth's attack helped his cause. Fisher was highly critical of Tweedmouth, testifying that "his capacity is unequal to his task as First Lord. It was almost painful to listen to a series of inconsequential and petulant asides."³ Repington congratulated Roberts on his "splendid stand" against this "vicious and deplorable attack" and hoped Tweedmouth would "be ashamed of himself when he saw the evidence".⁴ Slade reacted in a more practical way to the incident, writing Corbett that "This wasted time and led to no result, and it was not until nearly 1 o'clock that we could really get to work on Repington."⁵ When his time came, however, Slade and Ewart subjected Repington to a severe interrogation, and, Slade observed

got him to the stage of saying that he did not know and could not answer my questions. I have only got as far as placing the German Fleet - which has been reduced from everything that can float to the ships in active commission-in the Channel. I am now worrying him about the escort to the transports ...⁶

1. Corbett MSS. Slade to Corbett, 6 December 1907.

2. Cab 16/3A. p. 35.

3. Fisher. Op. Cit. 13 December 1907. p. 269.

4. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. Box R.1. R62/32, Repington to Roberts, 12 December 1907.

5. Corbett MSS. Box 6. Slade to Corbett, 12 December 1907.

6. Ibid.

Ewart also played an aggressive role in the cross-examination, for after the meeting Haldane told him "You ought to have been a K.C."¹

Roberts in his testimony had estimated that only 30,000 Regulars could be put into the field to meet a German invasion, as the Reserve of 80,000 to 90,000 could not be collected in time. He believed that the British should ideally enjoy a superiority of three to one against the invaders if the Regulars were still in Britain, and four to one if the Regulars were absent. Repington afterwards wrote to Roberts that what was needed

is a standard for the home army in the absence of the Regulars ... I do not think that one could make anything of a fight with less than 4 to 1 ... This gives 600,000 Territorials for the active army in Great Britain (second line); then there are the fortress troops of 150,000 or so ... So that, with the Regulars out of the country, we ought to have 800,000 Territorials available, at least.²

This remained one of Repington's goals, in contrast with Haldane's establishment of around 300,000, and was quite close to Roberts' "Million Man Standard."

The cross-examination of the pair was adjourned until January 27, 1908, and Repington hoped to seize the initiative by preparing another paper for the C.I.D. He confided to Roberts

As the Admiralty will have had a month to prepare commdrums for us at the next meeting, I think it will be advisable for us to take the offensive from the first, and to attack them by surprise ... It is most important that no one else should know of our intention for if they do they will be prepared to object to our reading it.³

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1. Ewart Diary. 12 December 1907.
 2. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. Box R.1 R62/32, Repington to Roberts, 12 December 1907.
 3. Ibid. R62/33. Repington to Roberts, 22 December 1907.

Repington was also perceptive enough to focus upon Fisher's "brain trust" as his most formidable opposition.

Julian Corbett is an enraged Blue Water man, one of the half dozen doctrinaires who are the curse of England. They have, however, the Admiralty and all the great steel and ship-building interests behind them, and they have a strong position in the Times (owing to Capper, Thursfield, and Robinson) ... I don't think Haldane quite realizes yet the strength and the guile of this confraternity. It is these folk whom we are really fighting on the Invasion Committee. It was owing to their pretensions that "the Navy is our all in all" that we only had 70,000 men in 1899 to do work requiring 400,000, and I hope you, Sir, will rub this in as often as you can.¹

Roberts, for his part, kept in touch with Balfour in hopes of gaining his support, and sent him various memoranda on invasion and conscription which represented that the Auxiliary Forces were unequal to the task of repelling invasion. Balfour, however, was not completely open in his dealings with Roberts. Although he informed the Field-Marshal that he had "the greatest attention and interest" in his arguments, Balfour was in touch with Ottley, the C.I.D. Secretary, offering evidence against Roberts' attacks on his 1905 speech and the C.I.D.'s decision of 1903.

Of that Committee, if my memory serves me right, Roberts was a member, and I am convinced that, if the Minutes of the Proceedings were searched, it would be found that he was a consenting party to the exposition of doctrine with which (as he now declares) 'he and everybody else with any knowledge of war are dissatisfied'.²

Repington was at the same time in consultation with Beresford, hoping to wring from him further statements that would damage the Admiralty,

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1. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. Box R.1 R62/34 Repington to Roberts, 28 December 1907.
 2. Balfour MSS. (49859) Balfour to Ottley, 8 January 1908; Roberts MSS. Case X20931. Box R.1 R8/24 Roberts to Balfour, 3 January 1908.

but was finding it "difficult to tie him down to precise statements of real value to us" and asked Roberts to influence Beresford towards this end.¹

While Roberts and Repington continued their manoeuvring for position, Slade and Corbett, encouraged by the C.I.D.'s acceptance of their memorandum, continued their close collaboration and study of the invasion problem. Fisher, however, was becoming less confident, and advised that "Repington is a clever scoundrel ... we must be very careful what we do." Slade thought that Fisher's anxiety was "only because he will not be honest with himself and looks on the whole thing from a partisan point of view rather than from a broader viewpoint."² But Fisher had more tangible reason for concern. Parliament would soon re-open, and there were rumours that a debate was being planned which would bring into question Fisher's conduct of naval policy. Beresford had re-surfaced in London, was attempting to get into touch with Slade, and was contacting members of the Cabinet regarding the alleged mismanagement of the Navy. Balfour was exerting pressure to have Beresford called before the inquiry, on the ground that he would otherwise make speeches alleging that the C.I.D. had white-washed Fisher, and was shielding him from criticism. But Slade noted that "the difficulty will be, if Lord Charles comes to the Committee, to prevent him from saying more than is judicious."³ If this was not enough, Fisher was also involved in a struggle with the Cabinet to raise the Naval Estimates. Repington considered taking advantage of Fisher's

1. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. Box R.1 R62/33 Repington to Roberts, 22 December 1907.

2. Corbett MSS. Box 6. Slade to Corbett, 4 January 1908; 11 January 1908.

3. Slade Diary. 6 January 1908; see also 17, 24 January 1908.

discomfiture, and suggested to Roberts:

How is not this a good opportunity for us to settle the whole matter out of court? What do you say to a compromise with Sir J.F. and his merry men, on the basis that if they support our views for a strong Territorial Army and withdraw their pretensions to play the part of both Army and Navy, we will support them on their increased estimates?¹

But nothing came of Repington's intrigues. As the next C.I.D. meeting approached, Repington had to content himself with "fashioning a few darts to throw at Slade if he becomes annoying."²

After all the manoeuvring and secret dread, the meeting of January 27th was an anticlimax. Slade proved, with the help of charts, that the Germans could not close the Straits of Dover, and Repington stated his opinion that the Germans would not use less than 120,000 to 150,000 troops to conquer England, with which Asquith agreed. Esher recorded that "Asquith allowed an excess of discursive talk, and the result was 1½ hours of boredom. Repington was very good, but in the last quarter of an hour (which was excellent) he was put into considerable difficulty."³ Slade was disappointed that he could not continue his cross-examination of Repington, for the meeting had "resulted in a general wrangle between him, Lord Roberts, Lord Lovat and myself. Mr. Asquith would not support me in any way, and the result was that nothing was done except squabble"...⁴ About the only positive result of the meeting was that Asquith directed that a Commander-in-Chief be established to control all home defence.⁵

1. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. Box R1 R62/35 Repington to Roberts, 2 Jan. 1908.

2. Ibid. R62/26 Repington to Roberts, 22 January 1908.

3. Cab 16/3A. p. 115. Esher Op.Cit. 27 January 1908. p. 278.

4. Slade Diary. 27 January 1908.

5. Cab 16/3A. p. 130.

The antagonists instead prepared for the next series of meetings, three of which took place during February. Slade and Corbett were confident of their position, and Slade estimated that "it will be possible to meet the whole case in about an hour or an hour and a half" in a single meeting of the sub-committee. Repington, however, was disheartened, and on receiving a notice to attend, wrote Roberts that he was "unaware of what more is wanted from us."¹ The next meeting featured the testimony of Count Gleichen, a former British Military Attaché in Berlin. He, however said little to strengthen the case for invasion. He did not believe the Germans could assemble the invasion army with any speed. If they did, it would consist of the troops nearest the ports, which were not elite formations and had few cyclists. Although he believed that the General Staff had plans for the invasion of England, he could not accept the argument that a surprise landing was possible. Lord Lovat, who followed, however, was one of Roberts' fellow conspirators, and gave a long and persuasive account of various developments in Germany which pointed to the likelihood of invasion. The German army had shown much interest in cycles, an ideal means of moving troops in England, and was known to be practising amphibious operations. The latest German liners were manned with gun crews and had reinforced decks for gun-mountings, which would enable them to fight off torpedo attacks if they were used as invasion transports.² Roberts remarked that the German landing practices had produced marvellous results, for a division could now be landed in five to six hours, and added an argument for invasion based on German public

1. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. Box R.1 R62/38. 30 January 1908; Slade Diary. 29 January, 1 February 1908.

2. Cab 16/3A. pp. 133-136; 175-202.

opinion.

I believe everybody in Germany - every school and University in Germany - is being educated to the idea of invading England. I have asked very carefully, and that is the opinion. They look forward to England being humbled somehow or other and their way of doing it is through a big navy.¹

But the Admiralty was heartened by the tenor of the proceedings and even Fisher seemed to be much less anxious, although he was irritated by reports that Haldane had told the Prime Minister that "the Admiralty was asking for a big Territorial Army."² It was at this point that some new light was shed on the subject from an extremely interesting source. Captain Philip Dumas, the British Naval Attaché in Berlin, reported that Cross-Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, the German Minister of Marine, had unburdened himself on the topic of

all the nonsense about invasion lately written in England. Out of the 30,000 military Officers in Germany one might expect that one or two sheep-headed Lieutenants might write such rubbish, yet he was informed that Lord Roberts was gravely bringing it forward in England as possible and probable. It was incredible to him that a great soldier and a statesman, for whom he had always had the greatest respect, could believe in such a thing ... He had spoken of 100,000 men but that number would be wholly useless in England even if we had no army there to oppose them. Under circumstances of invasion it was certain that a million semi-trained soldiers would spring up like magic, and in that connection, he would advise me to think over and study the German halt before Paris in 1870. Any ideas regarding the keeping open the lines of communication had only to be thought of to raise a smile. All the fleets of Europe put together against England could not guarantee it. So many articles on the subject had been sent him of late that he had necessarily given it a great deal of thought, and from his point of view as a statesman, a naval officer and a gentleman, he declared plainly that this foolish panic was wholly stupid and impossible to understand.³

1. Cab 16/3A. pp. 190-91.

2. Slade Diary. 4, 7 February 1908; Corbett MSS. Box 6. Slade to Corbett, 4 February 1908.

3. G.F. Goshoh and H.V. Temperly. British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. Vol.VI. H.M.S.O., London, 1930. p. 116. Dumas to Lacollies, 3 February 1908.

Tirpitz's effusion was studied closely at the Foreign Office and was printed for the C.I.D. One authority remarked that the question of feasibility of the operation was best left to the military and naval authorities. But the Foreign Office was bound to establish whether or not the Germans believed it practicable: they had "strong grounds for believing that they do - or did until recently at any rate." The Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, a member of the invasion inquiry, was greatly interested in Tirpitz's comments and remarked

There is no doubt whatever that the Germans have studied and are studying the question. German officers on leave come here and explore our coasts and no doubt send in reports which are interesting and welcome to their own authorities. No doubt also the German Staffs work out possible plans. We too continue to work out the best methods of making any such plans miscarry. As long as we have sufficient superiority of Navy the risk will be too great for the Germans to run it in cold blood, but it is a danger to be borne in mind in all contingencies.¹

Another interesting development occurred when Ewart, the D.M.I., received a communication from a German General Staff officer offering to sell the German plans for the invasion of England. Ewart purchased them by an indirect means and described them to a later C.I.D. meeting.²

Meanwhile, as the inquiry progressed, Repington recognized that things were going against him. He lamented to Roberts: "it is a thousand pities that one of us cannot remain on the committee to hold a watching brief and to cross-examine", and suggested that Roberts apply to Asquith for this privilege.³ Repington tried to keep in touch with the course of the inquiry by cultivating various important officers socially, such as Ewart,

1. British Documents on the Origins of War, 1898-1914, Vol. VI. p. 117.

2. Ewart Diary. 29 May 1908, 12 July 1909.

3. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. Box R.1 R62/41 Repington to Roberts, 10 February 1908.

Murray, Grierson, and Ottley. Whatever information Repington may have uncovered was not encouraging, for the trend of the remaining testimony and evidence was even more inimical to the case for invasion and surprise attack.

Sir William Ward, the Consul-General at Hamburg, was quoted as saying

I was born in Hamburg, and I have lived all my life there, and I know all about the city; it is quite inconceivable that anything of this sort could possibly take place without me or my people knowing something about it - it is simply inconceivable.¹

An additional report from Captain Philip Dumas in Berlin was equally critical of the chances of a "Bolt from the Blue", and corroborated Ward's comments. Dumas reported that it would be impossible to collect shipping in Hamburg secretly, as it was full of British subjects and lay 65 miles from the sea. It was "barely possible" that 10,000 could be embarked from Emden if the shipping was already collected and available. A large force could likewise be collected in secrecy at Wilhelmshaven, but it would be detected as it passed through Bremen where, again, there was a large English colony. Dumas estimated

Probably the maximum number that could get away unseen (Ships must pass through the lock gates about high water) would be from 10,000 to 15,000 ... I believe that some 30,000 to 40,000 men might possibly embark in secrecy from the various sea ports in separate expeditions, but the very fact of that dispersion makes in itself the probability of maintaining the secrecy more and more unlikely.²

Slade also testified to the ease of discovering an invading fleet, and recalled having seen smoke from a fleet burning best Welsh smokeless coal when it was 30 miles distant. It seemed apparent that any German armada would be noticed during the daylight hours of its passage to England.³

Hamburg was the only town large enough to conceal 75,000 would-be invaders, yet "because the town is so full of English shipping, merchants and agents,

1. Cab 16/3A. p. 204.

2. Ibid. p. 220.

3. Ibid. p. 226.

not to speak of sympathetic foreigners," that it was inconceivable that some advance notice would not come of German preparations for a massive overseas expedition.¹

While the C.I.D. was reaching its preliminary conclusions on German invasion, a further communication from Berlin, the notorious "Tweedmouth letter" from the Kaiser to Tweedmouth, had been made public by Repington, who soon had "the whole of England and the court buzzing like a hive of bees."² Public feeling, already high because of the recent "disclosure" of Germany's accelerated shipbuilding programme, went against the Admiralty, and was strongly critical of the First Lord, who had sent the Kaiser information on the British naval programme not yet presented to Parliament. Slade and Escher supposed that Repington's "motive to do such a thing was to get a bit back from Lord Tweedmouth and the Admiralty for the way in which his case had been treated in the Invasion Committee." Their suspicions were correct, for Repington's motives were purely vindictive. He gloated in a private letter to Roberts:

Yes, I hope my calculated indiscretion may do good to the cause we have at heart. We shall see how Tweedmouth gets out of it on Monday, but I fancy he may regret his impertinence to you, and his description of our little party as a "ring of wild and self-convinced alarmists" (sic) He has been vain and impudent and I thought it time to put a stop to these underground communications, when we pay such a large sum for a Foreign Office and a Berlin Embassy.³

This form of revenge proved most effective. In vain did Fisher write to the King protesting that Repington was "absolutely unscrupulous": within a month Tweedmouth had been replaced by Reginald McKenna as First Lord, as a result of the public outcry which Repington had engineered.

1. G.P. Gooch and H.V. Temperley. Op. Cit. p. 123. Dumas to Lascelles, 12 February 1908.

2. Slade Diary. 7 March 1908.

3. Roberts MSS. Case X20927. Box R.1 R62/47. Repington to Roberts, 7 March 1908.

But although the "invasionists" had helped to remove Tweedmouth from the Admiralty, their cause gained little thereby, and it was becoming increasingly apparent to those on the sub-committee that their fustian arguments for German invasion had very little substance in fact. Esher noted that Asquith was taking better control of the proceedings and was being much firmer in his handling of witnesses, while Roberts' corresponding arguments seemed to be faltering. Even Lovat's testimony at the meeting of March 3rd, "was being pulled to pieces generally. Lord Roberts was there and made the same speech that he has made before, asking us to agree with him that we are in a most dangerous state and that our only salvation is a large army."¹ Repington and Roberts consoled themselves by reiterating their arguments in periodicals and the press, enjoying the editorial support of the United Service Magazine, the Spectator, and the National Review, while articles on invasion appeared in a number of other journals as well.²

Corbett, Slade, and Ewart continued to work behind the scenes to bridge the gap of the two services, encountering wavering resistance from their superiors. Nicholson, who had proved so adamant about invasion in the 1903 inquiry, remained querulous. He was hostile to any suggestion to limit the size of the home defence army and at first was "entirely opposed" to Corbett's compromise formula for interservice responsibility for defence against invasion. Slade visited Nicholson and convinced him that "we should never get on at all unless we settled the principles first and the details afterwards."³ Slade experienced similar difficulties with the

1. Marder. Op. Cit. p. 167. Fisher to Edward VII, 8 March 1908, p. 168. Edward VII to Fisher, 10 March 1908; Esher. Op. Cit. p. 250, 3 March 1908.

2. Lt. A.C. Dewar. "Invasion from a naval point of view." United Service Magazine. April 1908. pp. 10-23; Leo Maxse. "Political Parties and National Defence." National Review. April 1908. pp. 312-16; "The United Service Magazine Prize Problem." United Service Magazine. April 1908. pp. 89-90. Major C.H. Wilson. "Invasion exemplified by History."

even more intractable Fisher, who was always ready to revert to his customary overstatements and categorical assertions.

He wants to lay down figures and details and I want to keep the thing on broad principles. I had a long talk with Ewart about it and he and I are quite agreed. I hope he will be able to calm Nicholson down and prevent his raising questions which no one can answer. Sir John has no idea how he confuses the issues when he launches out on one of his digressions.¹

Fisher later succumbed to temptations "to expunge all reference to the army at all" in the Admiralty papers on invasion, but Slade successfully "pointed out to him that the question could not be treated in that way." Eventually, after a further passage of arms with Tweedmouth, as well as Fisher, Slade could report a limited success.

I finished reading my paper and had to stand considerable fire from various quarters, but I think it was on the whole very satisfactory. The army have quite come round to our view and I think we shall now work very amicably together. I had a long discussion with Nicholson and French afterwards in which French said that what he particularly did not want was that the Army should not be turned into Marines.²

Slade and Ewart slowly prevailed over the suspicion and extremism of their superiors and progress was slowly achieved, especially among the "neutral" political authorities sitting on the C.I.D. After one meeting, Asquith came up to Slade and told him "he had taken my papers and based his declaration on them, and that it seemed to be generally acceptable... It

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2. (contd. from previous page). United Service Magazine. April 1908. pp. 24-27; Lord Ellenborough. "Invasion from a Naval Point of View." United Service Magazine. May 1908, pp. 206-07; "U.S.M. Prize Essay." United Service Magazine. May 1908. pp. 113-137; June 1908, pp. 229-247; July 1908, pp. 252-259; "The German Peril." Quarterly Review. July 1908. p. 295 ff; "Invasion Unopposed." United Service Magazine July 1908. p. 248-251; Col. F.W. Maude. "The Question of Invasion." United Service Magazine. July 1908. pp. 437-440; "The Intellectual Preparation of the German Army for a War with England." United Service Magazine. July 1908. pp. 496-505; A.W. Pollock. "A Bolt from the Blue." United Service Magazine August 1908. pp. 877-889; "The Invasion of Britain." Spectator. 29 September 1908. pp. 438-40.
 3. (contd. from previous page). Corbett MSS. Box 6. Slade to Corbett. 11,15 February 1908.
 1. Slade Diary. 15 February 1908.
 2. Ibid. 20 February 1908.

seems to be all working out satisfactorily on the right lines." Further meetings were held with Nicholson, "to convince him that no increase of the army would free the Navy for operations far afield" and Slade met with General Murray, the Director of Military Training, and found him very sympathetic to "cordial cooperation between the services."¹ Fisher, however, remained a problem child. During one C.I.D. meeting he made "very wild statements" which Slade had to have expunged from the official record.² Even Ottley had to be reminded of the fact that principles had to take precedence over details.³ By the end of April 1908, Slade was wearily hoping that "they would let it all drop. I am sure it would be better to do so."⁴ But Admiral Sir William May, the Second Sea Lord, assured Corbett that his Memorandum "had lifted the whole controversy out of mere detail", and that Nicholson and French had finally agreed to it as the basis of an interservice approach. Fisher, however, still stuck to his "dinghy view" that only the crew of a rowboat could evade the fleet and land on British soil.⁵

The conciliators received reinforcement when Balfour was invited to deliver a paper on invasion before the sub-committee. This was an important precedent and (as Esher informed the King) "a novel departure full of interest and good omen" that the leaders of both parties should confer jointly "upon the most vital questions of National policy and defence."⁶

1. Slade Diary. 12 26 March 1908.

2. Ibid. 2 April 1908. See also 8 April 1908.

3. Ibid. 5 April 1908.

4. Ibid. 27 April 1908.

5. Corbett Diary. cited by Schurmann. Op. Cit.

6. Esher. Op. Cit. pp. 316-317. Esher to Edward VII, 29 May 1908; see also Esher to Balfour, pp. 317-18.

Balfour performed a valuable service to the conciliation party by pointing out that interservice cooperation in defence against invasion had been consistent C.I.D. policy from the very beginning. He stated that "in view the view expressed by the Committee of 1903 a large defending force is as essential a necessity of home security as an overwhelming naval force." Roberts and Repington had misread the situation, for the C.I.D. had never represented that "the unaided navy is equal to the task of defending our shores." Balfour quoted his 1903 Memorandum.

The difficulty of invasion is primarily naval; the magnitude of the naval difficulty depends largely upon the size of the invading army which has to be convoyed to our shores and protected during embarkation; the size of the invading army depends chiefly on the resistance it will meet with when they come to be landed; the resistance they will meet with depends on the number and efficiency of the troops who will be called on to resist them; so that an effective home force is assumed in the very statement of the problem we are attempting to solve.¹

Balfour next turned to deal with Fisher's contention that the 1903 decision was a permanent one. He emphasized that he had always thought that defence policy should be subject to periodic review in the light of new political and military developments. Balfour accepted the bulk of Repington and Roberts' arguments for a review of the question: Germany, not France, was now the main potential enemy, and her capacity for overseas attack had increased tremendously in the last five or six years. There were other changes bearing on the risk of invasion. The Admiralty estimate of the tonnage required per man was less than in 1903, owing to recent experience in the Russo-Japanese War, the Clacton Manoeuvres, and German landing experiments. Furthermore, the British General Staff had estimated that

1. Cab 3/2/1/43A. "Statement made by Mr. A.J. Balfour before the Sub-Committee on Invasion." 29 May 1908. p. 3.

the minimum size of an invading army could now be reduced from 70,000 to 41,000, in the event that the Regular Army was out of the country. Only the development of the submarine and wireless were factors favouring the defence.¹

Balfour now turned to examine Repington's hypothesis. This, he noted, was based on a double surprise: a treacherous attack on the fleet followed by a surprise landing in the Firth of Forth. He personally believed Germany would attack, with reluctance, in such a manner^{only} that if it made the difference between success and failure, and doubted that "the horror of the civilized world, however loudly it was expressed, would be of the slightest value to the inhabitants of these islands." Therefore, appropriate precautions should be taken. Balfour suggested that British warships be given standing orders to let down torpedo nets in exposed anchorages. Even so, such a form of attack was unlikely unless Britain was already involved in a war with other nations. Like other authorities, Balfour agreed that Repington's hypothesis broke down on the vital point of secrecy. Invasion would be far more likely to succeed as an intervention in a war when the bulk of British naval and military forces were already committed to a distant field, for example, in repelling an American invasion of Canada. He believed the Germans were building up their fleet for such an eventuality: in the above contingency, half the navy would be far distant abroad, and only the Territorials would remain in Britain. No other war would take British forces to such a great distance. Repington's version of attack was fanciful unless Britain was already involved in war with another power,

1. Cab 3/2/1/43A. "Statement made by Mr. A.J. Balfour before the Sub-Committee on Invasion ..." 29 May 1908. pp. 4-5.

and then even 41,000 invaders in England would be very dangerous. Although Balfour personally found the German scare odious, it seemed obvious that Germany was only awaiting an opportunity to attack the only power which stood between her and the universal domination of Europe. Even at this very moment German officers were enthusiastically making maps and plans of the shores of Eastern England in preparation for invasion.¹

The sub-committee was greatly impressed by Balfour's presentation. Slade thought it "a most excellent speech in which he summed up the whole situation in a most remarkable manner." and Ewart judged it an "admirable speech."² Esher congratulated Balfour, saying

I cannot conceive that any reasoned statement upon so grave a matter has ever been made with such masterly knowledge of the subject and so masterly a form of exposition. I assure you that everyone was amazed, and those who had not grasped the extent of your powers were stupefied.³

But Balfour's paper was not brilliant enough to end the rancour between Fisher and Nicholson. Nicholson had followed Balfour with a General Staff paper which contained several contentious statements, including the argument that a large home army would help to free the fleet from home shores. This was too much for Fisher, who immediately lost his temper, and said he could not accept a word of Nicholson's memorandum. The new First Lord, McKenna, backed Fisher up and, said Slade, "chimed in like a little dog who barks when the big dog bays."⁴ The result was that Slade and Corbett had to prepare yet another memorandum in reply. Slade chided Nicholson afterwards, telling him that "it was very injudicious of him to have raised the whole

1. Cab 3/2/1/43A. 29 May 1908. pp. 7-8.

2. Slade Diary. 29 May 1908; Ewart Diary. 29 May 1908.

3. Esher. Op. Cit. Esher to Balfour, 29 May 1908.

4. Slade Diary. 29 May 1908; see also Corbett Diary. 29 May 1908.

question again, but he said he had not done it with that intention, but with the objective of meeting the Admiralty halfway."¹

Although the taking of evidence now came to a close, the final report of the inquiry took five months to work out to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. In June Haldane told Corbett that the old quarrel was "as bad as ever". Corbett protested and Haldane eventually admitted that "a solid community of opinion was being formed: it would be alright. He agreed but for the men at the top meaning Fisher and Nicholson."² Both service chiefs were understandably adverse to having decisions forced upon them from below. First Nicholson argued that a better case could be made out for a German invasion than the situation outlined by Repington. Slade commented "this was a natural view but it is not capable of being upheld."³ Slow progress was made. Ewart recorded in his diary on July 20th

We seem to be getting to very close grips with the Navy in regard to the broad principles of Imperial Defence ... Sir John Fisher is very troublesome, his assertive optimism is not altogether convincing; and yet Lord Roberts' "bolt from the blue" theories altogether overstep the mark and spoil his case.⁴

The inevitable compromises took place. On July 27th, the final meeting of the sub-committee, Ewart felt that "we soldiers may be content with the terms of the report of the Committee."⁵ Yet the final acceptance of the report involved one last struggle, and Ewart confessed "I signed the report with some reluctance; it is a compromise which expresses no one's opinion

1. Slade Diary. 29 May 1908; see also Corbett Diary. 29 May 1908.

2. Corbett Diary. 19 June 1908, cited in Schurmann, Op. Cit.

3. Slade Diary. 21, 22 October 1908.

4. Ewart Diary. 27 July 1908.

5. Ibid. 20, 27 July 1908.

absolutely. But it is the best report we can get under the circumstances."¹ Slade lived in continual apprehension that Fisher would make a last-minute recantation.

He does not like the report although it expresses exactly what we want to have recognized. He is so bitterly antagonistic to the present regime at the W.O. that I am afraid he might even want to upset it at the last moment.

But Fisher remained silent, although Asquith recognized that Fisher had acquiesced only "very grudgingly".² Slade and Ewart had imposed their policy on their factions superiors, but it was not without cost. Because Fisher had grown suspicious of Slade's good relations with the War Office, Slade was eventually relieved of his post as D.W.I. in March 1909, and sent into virtual exile on the East Indies station. Ewart, his opposite number, confided his suspicions to his diary.

I can't help thinking - and I know Slade thinks it - that old Fisher is deliberately getting rid of him. Slade has shown himself a strong man; no tool, and he has perhaps been too friendly to the Military.³

Ewart suffered a similar fate later. He sided with the Government during the Curragh crisis, and ended his military career in obscurity as C-in-C, Scotland.⁴ But the invasion report which was largely a result of the co-operation of the two men, and Corbett, had an important influence on national strategy.

The final report accepted Balfour's argument that a surprise attack was "not sufficiently remote to be ignored", especially as it might be the decisive factor between German military failure or success. Predictably,

1. Ewart Diary. 22 October 1908.

2. Slade Diary. 21, 22 October 1908.

3. Ewart Diary. 4 January 1909.

4. Private information supplied by Mr. H.L. Monro, M.P.

however, the sub-committee rejected Repington's arguments for a "bolt from the blue." Neither the Admiralty nor the War Office believed a surprise attack was possible, and the Foreign Office in addition pointed out that impending hostilities could be forecast by the movement of securities on the Stock Exchange. The C.I.D. echoed Balfour:

that Germany could be isolated for the requisite number of hours from the whole of the civilized world ... is not under modern conditions a possible operation... the very attempt to stop communications would destroy secrecy in a country which is getting more and more commercially connected with every corner of the world, at a time when every corner of the world is in telegraphic communication, wireless and otherwise, with London.¹

The invasion fleet would cover a large area and its smoke would be visible for a great distance during the day and it could not run at night without lights: all factors which made detection almost inevitable. In addition, the scheme of the redistribution of the fleet which is now in progress is gradually having the effect of placing more of our ships in the North Sea, and thereby rendering our position still more secure.²

Following Corbett's argument for an interservice role in home defence, the report also emphasized that

our army for Home defence ought to be sufficient in numbers and organisation not only to repel small raids, but to compel an enemy who contemplates invasion to come with so substantial a force as will make it impossible for him to evade our fleets ... to insure an ample margin of safety, such a force may, for purposes of calculation, be assumed to be 70,000 men.³

As a consequence of this estimated scale of attack, the C.I.D. resolved that if the Regulars ever left the country, "the Territorial Force should at once be embodied and that at least two divisions of the Regular Army should remain in the United Kingdom until such time as the Territorial Force shall be considered fit to remain in the field." If the Territorials were

1. Cab 3/2/1/44a. "Invasion: Report of a Sub-Committee appointed by the Prime Minister to reconsider the question of overseas attack." 22 October 1908. p.7 (original in italics.)

2. Ibid. p. 5.

3. Ibid. p. 9.

embodied at the beginning of a war, there should at all times be a sufficient force of Regulars and Territorials to compel the Germans to bring over 70,000 troops for the conquest of Britain.

Until at least four months had elapsed after the embodiment of the Territorial Force, it would seem necessary to retain two divisions of Regular troops fully mobilised in the United Kingdom. Subsequently the stiffening of Regular troops might be reduced in proportion to the progress made by the Territorial Force in mobility, discipline, and fighting efficiency. It is difficult, if not impossible, to say how Territorial soldiers would compare after four or six months' training with picked German troops, but it seems prudent to assume that they should be at least double the numbers of the invaders. The sanctioned establishment of the Territorial Force is hardly sufficient to meet the requirements specified above, while its actual strength at present is quite inadequate.¹

Compared with the first invasion inquiry concluded five years before, the 1908 study confirmed and reinforced the responsibilities of both services in home defence. By establishing a definite scale of attack, the C.I.D. had provided a new impetus for home defence planning, as well as endowing the nascent Territorial Force with a new significance and a mandate for expansion. The "amphibian" school had been vindicated, and a foundation laid. The War Office was not slow to take advantage of the Committee's recommendations and had, in fact, anticipated them by producing in advance an exhaustive paper outlining the future role of the Territorial Force in line with its conclusions.² There were new factors, too, in the secret councils of the Admiralty. While naval planners continued to treat the possibility of a German invasion as almost a strategic irrelevancy, their confidential war plans show that they were well aware that it had a powerful hold on the public imagination. The Admiralty plans for a war with

1. Cab 3/2/1/44A. 22 October 1908. p. 9.

2. WO 33/462 A1291 "Home Defence: Appreciation of the Situation in the United Kingdom in the event of hostilities with a European Maritime Power."
1 September 1908.

Germany in 1908 noted that

The possibility of raids is a serious factor to consider, not because of the actual damage that a raiding force could do, but because of the effect that it would produce on the public mind, and consequently on our commercial position ... If the Government is sufficiently strong to resist the pressure of public opinion and refuse to be coerced into departing from its carefully considered war plans, raids and attacks on commerce would only represent so much loss of man and ships to the Germans. But it is doubtful if such would be the case under ordinary circumstances, and we may expect such an outcry in Parliament as would seriously hamper the prosecution of our plans. For this reason it is important to consider these forms of attack.¹

The Admiralty's concern over the power of public opinion was well-founded. The C.I.D. had confirmed that invasion from Germany was a more likely possibility than one from France, and its recommendations for a deterrent indicate that it was not regarded as impossible. While the C.I.D. had considered the evidence for a German invasion privately, individuals and organisations had been publishing books and pamphlets outlining the possibility of such an attack, and in the months immediately following the end of the inquiry the invasion agitation entered a new and critical phase, which was not to be equalled in intensity until the outbreak of war in 1914.

1. Adm 116/1043B. Part II. "War Plans: Anticipated German Actions of War". 18 June 1908, pp. 9, 5-6.